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THE

MYSTERIOUS SEAL,

A ROMANCE.

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MYSTERIOUS SEAL,

A

ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By W. C. PROBY.

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THE

MYSTERIOUS SEAL:

A

ROMANCE.

CHAP. I.

CONRAD was wholly ignorant of the Baron's orders reſpecting him, and concluding at the time he was arreſted by the domeſtics, and his apartment ſearched, that his conduct relative to Matilda had been diſcovered, ſubmitted in ſullen ſilence to his fate, and diſdained unavailing lamentation. When they led him towards the door leading to the dun-

geons beneath the Weſt Tower, he ſuppoſed he was to be confined there for a ſhort time, and ſhould ſoon be brought before the Baron to anſwer for what the latter would no doubt conſider an heinous offence. Little did he imagine, depraved as he knew the Baron to be, that ſo deteſtable a thought could influence his mind, as that of ſilently murdering him in the gloomy caverns where he was now about to be immured.

When the door was locked, and he found himſelf really confined in the ſubterraneous apartments beneath the Tower, which report had conſtantly perſiſted in aſſerting to be haunted, he felt a ſlight degree of terror, which was not abated by the recollection of what had paſſed in the other part of the dungeons, whilſt he ſat at the end of the paſſage with her whom he miſtook for Matilda, and the real cauſe of which was unknown to him.

The

The darkneſs of the place, rendered more gloomy by having been plunged into it from the light of day, added not a little to his alarm, and he remained for ſome time fixed to the ſpot where he had been left, without the leaſt inclination or ability to move.

At length, ſomewhat recovering from his agitation, he endeavoured to grope about, and diſcover if there was any paſſage to another part of the Tower, in poſſeſſion of a greater degree of chearfulneſs. He wandered with his hands for ſome time over the wall, on one ſide, and at length thought he felt a door; puſhing againſt it, to his great joy it opened, but alas! only to diſappoint his hopes. Nothing but darkneſs was ſtill before him; and entering at the door he had opened, after walking with the utmoſt caution, and groping about its

walls, he had every reaſon to ſuppoſe it to be a dungeon, deſtined for the confinement of criminals, or unfortunates like himſelf, who had incurred the diſpleaſure of the haughty Lord of the Caſtle.

He returned diſappointed into the paſſage; but ſtill alive to hope, continued his endeavours, and puſhing open another door he had diſcovered, was once more in expectation of meeting with ſucceſs, but was again diſappointed, and compelled to retrace his ſlow and cautious ſteps from the darkneſs he had entered, into the gloom he had juſt quitted.

In a ſimilar manner he opened ſeveral doors, arranged on the ſame ſide, but was too ſurely convinced they led only to a range of dungeons, which ſeemed to be exactly like thoſe that occupied the ſpace beneath the Eaſtern Tower.

He

He now concluded he had only a choice of dark ſubterranean apartments, and deſpaired of being able to make his way to any of the chambers in the upper regions of the Tower. With a very ſmall portion of hope, he explored the wall on the other ſide of the paſſage, as he ſuppoſed it was what in reality he found it to be, a mere partition of ſeparation, without any ſemblance of a door.

Returning to the ſtairs, he reaſcended them to the door which now ſeparated him from the ſociety of man, though he ſtill at intervals heard the "buſy hum," which now and then agitated the Caſtle. Here he diſcovered the proviſions that had been left for him, which had hitherto eſcaped his notice. Sitting down at the ſummit of the ſtairs, he began to muſe upon the waywardneſs of his fate, and ſuppoſing he had been betrayed by Arthur

or Jaques, lamented he had called in their aſſiſtance, and blamed himſelf for not proceeding alone to reſcue his Matilda from the evils that ſurrounded her; but the impracticability of the attempt forcibly preſented itſelf, and juſtified his conduct. He reflected upon her preſent ſituation, for he doubted not from the circumſtance of his arreſt, that ſhe was again in the power of the Baron; perhaps betrayed to him by the perfidious Arthur. He reflected, till maddening with rage, he was about, with the efforts of deſpair, to endeavour to force open the door that barred his communication with the caſtle. The uſeleſs folly of ſuch an act ſtruck his mind, and with a ſomewhat greater degree of calmneſs, he again took the ſeat from whence he had haſtily ariſen, and muſed in ſilent melancholy on his loved Matilda.

He

He knew her virtue to be firm as adamantine rock, but what was not to be feared from the inſidious arts of the Baron, practiſed in depravity and ſeduction? and did theſe fail, what was not to be feared from his power? Alas! the feeble Matilda would become the victim of brutal force; and unyielding to perſuaſive arts, would meet the deſtruction of her innocence, from the effects of lawleſs power. Her numberleſs wrongs melted his ſoul, and he found himſelf betrayed into tears, when viewing them through the viſta of imagination.

He curſed his irreſolution when he ought to have fled with her from the caſtle, before the wiles of the Baron had entrapped her to his ſnare. Alas! he had delayed his determination till it was too late, and the very evil he was anxious to avoid, fell ſuddenly upon his head.

But the conſciouſneſs of having ſince her confinement, uſed every exertion in his power for her deliverance, in ſome degree calmed his agitation, and gave riſe to a ſmall ſhare of ſelf-approbation.

Hope was ſeldom abſent from his mind, and even now became its deluſive inmate. The myſtery which attended him, darted into his mind, and he ſtill cheriſhed the pleaſing expectation of penetrating its darkneſs, and acting a ſplendid character in the varied drama of life. Matilda again preſented her lovely form to his imagination; and perhaps, ſaid he, apoſtrophizing the fancied figure, I may ſtill be able to deliver thee from captivity, and preſerving thy honor inviolate, yet enjoy years of happineſs in tender union with thy virtues and amiable qualities. The deluſions of fancy cheated him of a portion of his ſorrow, and blunted the acuteneſs of his anguiſh.

His

His eyes had now in ſome meaſure accommodated themſelves to the darkneſs in which he was involved, and looking various ways, without any ſettled purpoſe, he fancied he perceived a door on one ſide of the ſtairs which he had not hitherto obſerved. He immediately advanced to it, and puſhed againſt it for a long time, until he deſpaired of opening it, and ſuppoſed it was faſt locked. Making, however, a deſperate effort, it at length gave way, and being thrown forward with ſome force by its ſudden opening, he found himſelf in what appeared to be a paſſage nearly dark. He now took courage, and proceeding onward, he perceived a door. This he opened with little trouble, and found himſelf in what had once been a magnificently furniſhed room, but every part of the furniture now abundantly exhibited the moſt

evident ſymptoms of decay. The broken pieces of a mirror were ſtrewed upon the floor; ſeveral chairs and tables were ſcattered about, nearly unfit for uſe from their ruined ſtate; and the tapeſtry had long become a prey to the inſidious moth. He ran to the windows, and found them ſecured by iron bars with the moſt ſolicitous care; looking through their interſtices, he was convinced he was on the ſame ſide of the Caſtle where he had reſided ſince his admiſſion within its walls, by ſeeing before him a part of that proſpect he had been accuſtomed to contemplate and admire, from the windows of his late apartment.

Nothing intereſting was to be perceived in the room, and he was about to quit it by the door he had entered at, when he perceived another on one ſide. Immediately advancing towards this, and opening

opening it with little difficulty, he entered into another apartment, nearly ſimilar in ruined grandeur to that he had left, and exhibiting the ſame precautions of ſecurity. He wondered at the aſſiduous pains which ſeemed to have been taken to render each apartment a priſon, but could not aſſign a cauſe for ſuch extreme precaution.

Advancing into another paſſage, which was ſomewhat enlivened by light admitted from without, he diſcovered that the dark paſſage he had entered, out of the dungeons, led into that he was now traverſing, and ſoon after diſcovered ſeveral other apartments, the doors of which opened into it. All theſe he induſtriouſly examined, and found the ſame marks of decay and ruin, but could diſcover nothing calculated to intereſt his curioſity.

Returning out of one of them into the

gloomy paſſage leading to the dungeons, he again advanced into the other, and at the farther end diſcovered a narrow ſtaircaſe. Aſcending, and opening a door he ſaw before him, he found himſelf in a ſort of anti-chamber, and puſhing back another door, in a ſpacious and lofty apartment, more magnificent in its appearance than thoſe below, but diſplaying only fallen grandeur, and worm eaten magnificence. Examining ſeveral apartments on the ſame floor, he at length entered into a chamber where a bed and hangings caught his eye, which appeared to have once abounded with lively tints, and faſcinating richneſs of colour, but was now faded and in tatters. Accidentally looking down upon the floor, he thought he perceived the marks of blood upon it; ſtarting at the ſight, he looked more attentively, but could not certainly diſtinguiſh whether his

his firſt conjecture had been right, as from the dark colour of the floor, and the faded tint of what he had taken for ſpots of blood, it was impoſſible to aſcertain the fact.

Advancing towards the bedſtead, the bed clothes were lying in much diſorder upon the bed, and he thought he perceived there too ſpots of blood; but ſtepping forward to examine them more minutely, with too great precipitation, he ſtruck himſelf violently againſt the bedſtead, and it giving way, the whole fell together upon the floor. Old and decayed, it only exhibited the appearance of what it had been, and now at the touch of Conrad became completely ruined.

Almoſt choaked with the duſt that copiouſly aroſe, he retired to ſome diſtance until it was diſſipated, and then again advanced with eager curioſity, to examine

examine into the reality of that appearance, which he had conceived to be blood. With ſome labour he removed the different pieces, which were now confuſedly jumbled together, and at length arrived at the bed clothes, the obſervation of which had ſo forcibly ſtruck him. From their decayed and torn ſtate, he could not here neither correctly aſcertain the truth of his ſuppoſition, but was ſtill of opinion he had been right in his conjecture. Searching a little farther, he diſcovered a dagger, which was evidently ſtained with blood. He now concluded, with a conſiderable degree of horror, that ſome one had been murdered in the bed he had been examining, and recollecting the report of the Tower being haunted, he turned round with much agitation, and anxiouſly looked about the chamber, with a terror which in a few moments he ſmiled at, as the effect of prejudice.

Reflecting

Reflecting upon the ſtains which appeared to be thoſe of blood upon the floor, he thought it might be poſſible to trace them, and diſcover whither the ſuppoſed murdered body had been carried. But though he carefully examined the floor, the ſigns of blood he had at firſt diſcovered, were loſt in its darkneſs and dirt as he proceeded, and he could not find any trace which could lead him to a conjecture as to the way which the ſuppoſed corpſe had been carried. He minutely ſearched the tapeſtry, which was much torn, but could diſcover no opening in the room, except that by which he had entered, and at length quitted the apartment with a conſiderable degree of terror, and much anxious curioſity to become acquainted with the cauſe of the fearful appearances that had exhibited themſeves to his view.

He

He now aſcended to the top of the building, and minutely examined every apartment with its contents in his way, but could not meet with any circumſtance at all likely to lead to any accurate concluſion concerning the crime he now ſuſpected to have been perpetrated within the walls of the building he was exploring, nor could he diſcover any farther trace of blood. He found ſeveral chambers above, which ſeemed to have been formerly appropriated to the purpoſes of repoſe; but their furniture was in a much more ruinous ſtate than that of the room where he had diſcovered thoſe appearances that in ſpite of his courage infuſed terror into his breaſt.

In the ardor of his examination, the calls of nature had been forgotten, but the cravings of hunger now induced him to deſcend to the ſpot where his proviſions had

had been left, and he immediately conveyed them to the ſpacious apartment he had entered immediately after aſcending the firſt flight of ſtairs. The windows of this room were barred in the ſame manner as thoſe below, and likewiſe all in the Tower, but the proſpect from thence was noble and commanding, and the apartment pleaſed his fancy better than the others he had examined; he determined therefore to take up his abode in it, until he was called from his impriſonment into the preſence of the Baron.

Having ſatisfied his appetite with a part of the proviſions which had been left for his uſe, he repaired to one of the windows and remained there a conſiderable time, gazing upon thoſe beauties of nature he had frequently before contemplated with pleaſure and delight. The hill, upon the brow of which him and his Matilda uſed often

often to ſit and watch the declining ſun, whilſt the moments ſwiftly paſſed away in the mutual interchange of love, was now in ſight from the windows of his priſon. The tendereſt recollections inſtantly ruſhed upon his mind; and with his eyes ſuffuſed in tears, he intently gazed upon the object, and contraſting the hours of happineſs they then unitedly enjoyed with the ſolitary anguiſh that now pierced their ſeparated minds, he yielded himſelf a prey to the moſt lively ſorrow and regret.

He long contemplated, and even derived a ſad pleaſure from its ſight, whilſt he was at the ſame time the victim of almoſt hopeleſs woe. At length, the tender memorials it called up, in ſome meaſure loſt their force by repetition; and his mind, returning to the place he was in, the reports relating to it, and the appearances he had diſcovered, he involuntarily

luntarily trembled, and fearfully turned round expecting ſome terrific object to meet his ſight: Aſhamed of his terror, he again recurred to the contemplation of the ſcene before him, until the rapid decline of the ſun warned him to make ſome arrangement for the purpoſe of obtaining repoſe.

In all the bed chambers he had explored, except that where he had ſeen the ſtains of blood, and which adjoined the room he was in, the beds and furniture was ſo much tattered, and in ſuch a ruinous ſtate as not to allow him the expectation of being enabled to arrange them ſo as to enjoy any comfortable ſleep. The adjoining chamber he heſitated to enter; but at length, laughing at his terrors, he again repaired to it, and removing ſome of the bed clothes, the ſpots of blood again met his eye. Affrighted

at

at the ſight, he was about precipitately to leave the room; but once more ſummoning courage to his aid, he placed them along with the bed upon the floor, and determined to repoſe there for the night.

Returning again to the apartment he had quitted, he took a laſt look at the proſpect he had been before contemplating, now nearly involved in darkneſs; and having again partaken of his proviſions, he retired, though with a trepidation he could not allay, to the chamber he deſtined for his repoſe.

He threw himſelf upon the bed, and cloſing his eyes, endeavoured to obtain ſleep by abſtracting his imagination in pleaſing reveries. But terror, in ſpite of all his efforts, ſtill haunted him, and frequently pourtrayed terrific figures before him, and compelled him to open his

eyes

eyes that he might diſpel the illuſion. Again he eſſayed to loſe himſelf in ſleep, and neither aſleep nor awake a groan ſeemed to vibrate upon his ear. Affrighted, he ſtarted up, and with palpitating heart anxiouſly and eagerly liſtened, but all was ſilent—it was only the deluſion of imagination, and he again laid down, but did not for ſome time recover ſufficient calmneſs to make another attempt to compoſe himſelf to ſleep, and, frequently ſtarting, fancied he heard the noiſe repeated.

A ſlumber ſtole over his ſenſes, and the room ſeemed to be ſuddenly illuminated; again, ſtarting, he fearfully opened his eyes and ſaw it enlightened. Trembling, he hardly dared to look again; but it was the moon beams playing upon the windows of the apartment that had ſo ſuddenly illumined it. Aſhamed of his terrors,

terrors, he again closed his eyes, and once more sunk into a slumber.

A female figure now appeared before him, pallid and bleeding, with features exactly resembling those in the portrait he had accidentally found in the ruined Castle, and which was nearly his own likness. Starting up, affrighted and pale with horror, the illusion vanished—it was only a dream. Unable to account for such an appearance, he sat up, fearfully looking around. The silence that reigned about him inspired an awe which overpowered his mind, and he ardently wished for a companion to speak to. Terror prevented him from lying down; and still agitated, he arose from the bed and paced the chamber, frequently looking round with an eager agitation he could not repress, until a considerable interval having elapsed he became more calm, and again

again threw himſelf upon the bed for the purpoſe of endeavouring to obtain repoſe.

Again a ſlumber overpowered his ſenſes, and once more the figure he had ſo fearfully contemplated appeared, and ſeemed to point to a part of the room oppoſite to that where he was now lying. Once more opening his eyes, he ſtarted up with terror and affright, but it was again the illuſion of imagination. His agitation became extreme, and unable to appeaſe the violent palpitation he experienced, he aroſe, and trembling, paced his chamber, whilſt he fearfully revolved in his mind the deception of fancy that had juſt occurred, and unwilling to attribute it to ſupernatural agency, was yet unable to aſſign a rational cauſe.

The reflections that occurred upon the ſubject contributed to abſtract his mind from the fearful gloom and awful ſilence

that

that environed him, and thus produce a greater degree of calmneſs and compoſure; until at length, reſuming his courage, he once more extended himſelf on the bed, and, exhauſted by the agitation he experienced, ſunk into a ſound ſleep, and experienced no further return of the terrific illuſion that had filled his mind with affright.

In the mean time, the Baron, ſtung with the reproaches of Matilda, and recovered from the agitation into which her concluding ſentence had thrown him in ſpite of himſelf, now again determined to ſummon her to his preſence. Repairing to the old apartment, he ſent a female to the door of her chamber, who ſoon returned, ſaying, ſhe had locked herſelf in, and refuſed to quit her apartment. The Baron enraged, ordered her door to be broke open, and herſelf forced into his preſence.

Matilda

Matilda had actually indignantly refuſed to proceed into the preſence of the Baron, and it was only from reflecting on the uſeleſſneſs of making any effort in defiance of his power, that ſhe at length conſented to repair to his apartment. Conveying with her the dagger ſhe had found, and now carefully concealed, ſhe reſolutely determined to plunge it to his heart if he endeavoured by force to deprive her of her innocence.

She accompanied the female who had been ſent by the Baron into his preſence, who, diſmiſſing the latter, and ſeizing the hand of Matilda, led her to a ſopha; and ſitting down beſide her, with a ſternneſs of manner he had hitherto withheld, ſaid, "Well, Matilda, have you maturely con-"ſidered the propoſal I made to you? "Is your lover to be racked upon the "wheel, and expire in excruciating tor-

" tures, or will you ſave his life by your " compliance?" Matilda was ſtruck with horror at the thought of her Conrad expiring in tortures, but ſtill retaining her firmneſs, ſhe ſaid, " My Lord, you may " rack me upon the wheel, and make " me expire in tortures by the ſide of " my beloved Conrad, and we ſhall ex- " perience even in that dreadful union " a greater degree of comfort than you, " amidſt all your wealth and ſplendor; " but the remembrance that he owed his " life to my diſhonour would rack him " with a greater torment than all your " tortures can inflict." The Baron was diſconcerted by her firmneſs, but determined not to give up his point; and aſſuming all the ſuavity of the moſt polite demeanour, he ſaid, " My lovely Matil- " da, I applaud your heroiſm. I did but " jeſt concerning Conrad; he is a harm-

" leſs

"leſs innoffenſive mortal, and though he "is my rival, I have no reaſon to be jea- "lous of him, and I have not the leaſt "idea of doing him any injury: I merely "made the propoſal for the ſake of a joke, "and I admire the firmneſs of your vir- "tue diſplayed in reſiſting it; but I aſſure "you, the man of your heart is alive and "well, and ſo ſhall remain." Matilda was now too ſuſpicious of the Baron's intentions to be any longer the dupe of his words. She was wholly ignorant what was really the fate of Conrad; but the Baron having diſcovered him to be her lover inſtead of her brother, the worſt was to be feared; and convinced of the depraved duplicity of her tyrant, and the total abſence of ſentiment in his mind and feeling in his breaſt, ſhe determined to preſerve an unyielding inflexibility, and be firmly prepared for whatever

might happen. Influenced by this determination, ſhe replied, "If, my Lord, I "were to draw a concluſion from the "innocence of Conrad, it muſt be of his "ſafety, for he has committed no crime "deſerving of puniſhment; he has only "made an endeavour, and I have to la-"ment it was unſucceſsful, to reſtore "me to the enjoyment of that freedom "which is my natural right, and of which "your injuſtice has cruelly deprived me." The Baron was again diſconcerted, but continued, "You are yourſelf, my lovely "Matilda, the votary of love, but you "make no allowance for the wildneſs of "my love: Am not I, think you, a pre-"ferable object to the mean and low "born Conrad? I have ſufficiently tried "your virtue, and convinced of its rock-"like firmneſs, will make you my wife: "You ſhall ſhine in ſplendor as the Baro-

"neſs

" neſs de Umfreville." But Matilda ſaw the cloven foot beneath all the gaudy ſpecioufneſs of his propoſal, and immediately replied, " I have not a heart to be- " ſtow, my Lord, and to give my hand " without it would at once be an act of " criminality, and productive only of " miſery to myſelf." " And do you " then," ſaid the Baron, with a greater degree of ſternneſs, " prefer the grove- " ling Conrad to the illuſtrious, the pow- " erful, the wealthy Baron de Umfre- " ville." " I do, my Lord," ſaid Ma- " tilda, " and why ſhould I conceal my " predilection: The virtues and the talents " of Conrad entitle him to reſpect, though " bereft of the accidental advantages of " rank and wealth." Her avowed preference ſtung to the quick the haughty and jealous Umfreville; and unable to repreſs his rage, he loſt ſight for a mo-

ment of his policy, and thundered out, "Your Conrad ſhall expire in tortures "before your face! I demeaned myſelf "by making an offer of marriage to a "low girl unworthy of my notice." Again, recollecting himſelf, and deprecating the rage he had diſplayed, he ſuddenly ſoftened his manner, and ſaid, "Excuſe, my lovely Matilda, the mad-"neſs of my love—I ſcarcely know what "I ſay." Matilda now looked upon him with calm contempt, and did not deign a reply. Unable to make any impreſſion upon her mind; and vexed and diſappointed at his ill ſucceſs, he diſmiſſed her to her chamber, to which ſhe gladly retired. She exulted in the inflexible firmneſs ſhe had diſplayed; and, no longer fearing his power, determined to treat him with a continuation of the ſame indignant contempt.

Arthur

Arthur in the mean time, vexed at the diſapointment he had experienced, at a time when he concluded, from the manner of Matilda, ſhe was a dupe to the ſnare he had laid for her, refuſed to yield up the expectation of again reſcuing her from the graſp of his father, and bearing her triumphantly to his own arms; and in league with Jaques concerted another ſcheme for her reſcue, in the execution of which each was to bear his part, and which they mutually hoped would be more ſucceſsful than the laſt.

CHAP. II.

CONRAD did not awake from the ſound ſleep into which he had at laſt ſunk, until late in the morning. The viſions of the night were ſtill ſtrongly impreſſed upon his mind; and recollecting that the female figure which had ſo vividly and in ſo ſingular a manner appeared to his imagination, pointed to a part of the room oppoſite to that where he lay, his curioſity induced him to examine minutely the tapeſtry on that ſide of the apartment marked by the imaginary form, but he failed in making any diſcovery tending at all to elucidate the myſterious

myſterious circumſtance that had occurred, and concluded it was, in reality, nothing more then a deception of his diſtempered fancy.

The day was paſſed much more unpleaſantly than the laſt; nothing now remained capable of intereſting his curioſity; and ſecluded from all intercourſe with books and men, he was without the means of employing his hours. Poſſeſſing a cultivated mind, the reſources of memory and reflection frequently afforded him amuſement, but yet he often experienced many irkſome and tedious moments. The proſpect that extended itſelf before the windows of his lofty apartment, recalled to his mind numberleſs tender remembrances, and though productive of painful ſenſations, they brought with them a melancholy pleaſure that induced him to return frequently

to the contemplation of the ſcene preſented to his view.

The evening again returned, and Conrad retired to his chamber of repoſe; the recollection of the terror he had experienced in the early part of the preceding night, in ſome meaſure appalled him, and he threw himſelf upon the bed with a ſort of awe upon his mind that excited ſenſations rather unpleaſant than agreeable.

He repeatedly endeavoured to cloſe his eyes in ſleep, but failed in the attempt; a terror ſtill hovered over his mind, and he frequently looked around with a conſiderable degree of fear; inſpired rather by the ſolemn ſilence of the place, than by any other cauſe.

A ſlumber at length ſtole over his ſenſes, and the figure he had ſeen the preceding night, appeared before him, pointing

pointing to the ſame place it had then diſtinguiſhed; ſtarting up with much trepidation, darkneſs only ſurrounded him, and nothing was to be ſeen. Amazed at an incident ſo exactly repeated two ſucceſſive nights, he muſed for ſome time as he ſat, upon the event, but unable to account for it, was compelled to have recourſe to ſupernatural cauſes.

His mind becoming rather more compoſed, he again extended himſelf upon the bed, and was more fortunate in obtaining ſleep, without being again alarmed; he repoſed comfortably the remainder of the night.

Anxious to ſeduce the virtue of Matilda, the Baron in the mean time, again ſent for her to his preſence.—"My "dear Matilda," ſaid he, "I have "greatly wronged you; Conrad ſhall be

" yours, you ſhall be happily united to " him, and paſs the remainder of your " days in all the bliſs of wedded love, " enjoying a happy independence, and " free from care and ſtrife;—I only aſk " in return, a proof of your gratitude, " a ſmall favour in exchange for the " boon I offer you, and which I pledge " my honour you ſhall enjoy." But Matilda conſidered him as incorrigibly vicious, and bound by no tie of honour or of virtue, and was upon her guard. She immediately replied, " An union " with Conrad, my Lord, would indeed " be a bleſſing, name what you expect " in return for the favour." The Baron heſitated and ſaid, " Do you not under- " ſtand me, Matilda?" " I am afraid I " do, my Lord, too clearly; but even " an union with Conrad, would be too " dearly bought, at the expence of diſ-

" honour."

" honour." " You don't wiſh then," ſaid the Baron, " to fly to the arms of " your lover?" " Yes, my Lord," replied Matilda, " I do, moſt ardently, " but if I muſt fly to them through the " portal of vice, then let me yield up all " thoughts of the wiſhed for happineſs." " And can it be," ſaid the Baron, " a " crime, to take one ſip of the cup of " pleaſure." " Yes, my Lord, it is the " deſcent of the firſt ſtep that hurries " on us irreſiſtably into the abyſs of " vice." " My Matilda," ſaid the Baron, " your ſtern maxims of virtue ill accord " with the faſcination of your beauty." " Beauty, my Lord, without innocence, " is a curſe to its poſſeſſor, and a ſnare " to all around." Your beauty, my " lovely girl," ſaid the Baron, " ſhall " bleſs the longing gaze of your Conrad." " Lead me to him, my Lord, and I will " repay

" repay you with gratitude." " I can-
" not loſe you ſo ſoon my Matilda," ſaid
the Baron, " your preſence is too ne-
" ceſſary to ſweeten the bitter cup of my
" exiſtence." Matilda, indignant at his
evaſions, at length ſaid, " My Lord,
" your attempts to ſeduce me from the
" paths of innocence and virtue, are
" uſeleſs; your efforts are vain; for
" never will I yield myſelf a willing prey
" to your lawleſs deſires." The Baron
frowned, and in a rage at being thus
defied by one whom he conſidered as
deſtined to be the paſſive ſlave of his will,
replied, in tones of vehement anger,
" Matilda, know you the extent of my
" power? know you that I can obtain
" by force, what your haughty ſoul re-
" fuſes to give." " I know it, my Lord,
" too well, but I ſet at defiance both
" your power, and your arts." Furious

at

at her reply, he ſummoned the females from the Tower, and ſternly commanded them to ſeize Matilda, and confine her in one of the dungeons beneath their habitation. Recollecting he poſſeſſed the key, and in the height of his fury forgetting the terrors he had before experienced, he determined to deſcend, and locking her in a dungeon, himſelf become her goaler: commanding the females who held the unreſiſting Matilda, with ſtern fury, to follow, he unlocked the door, and deſcended the ſtaircaſe; the females reluctantly followed, and pitying their unfortunate priſoner, it was only the dread of his power that induced them to obey his command.

Arriving at the bottom of the ſtairs, he opened the dungeon neareſt to them, and thruſting in Matilda, locked the door, and unpitying, left her to the gloom and dampneſs

dampneſs of her priſon. A ſmall portion of light and air arriving there by a circuitous courſe was admitted into the dark apartment, through ſome chinks in the walls. Matilda remained for ſome time in a kind of ſtupor, and did not attempt to move from the ſpot where ſhe had been left. The dark gloom of the place, which the glare of the torch, brought down by the Baron, and now taken away, rendered more terrifying, appalled her mind, and took from her the power of motion. At length, ſomewhat recovering, ſhe groped about, and found a ſtone projecting from the wall, upon which ſhe ſeated herſelf; and now muſing upon her ſituation, the treatment of the Baron ſerved to exaſperate her oppoſition to his wiſhes, and with ſtill greater firmneſs, ſhe reſolved to expire rather than comply, and to ſacrifice him

to

to her wrongs, if he attempted, by force, to aſſaſſinate her innocence.

The Baron again arriving in his apartment, paced about the room with a conſiderable degree of agitation. Irritated at the oppoſition he had met with, he rejoiced in the exerciſe of his power, in impriſoning the helpleſs victim of his fury: but ſmote by the admonitions of conſcience, remorſe became an inmate of his mind, and corrodingly prayed upon its reflections. The conflict agitated his breaſt, but long in the habit of ſtifling the appeals of conſcientious admonition, and toſſed in the whirlwind of paſſion, he furiouſly determined to continue the perſecution he had begun. Recollecting however the ſituation in which he had left Matilda, he conveyed to her ſome proviſions, and a ſmall lamp whoſe feeble glimmering.

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glimmering juſt ſerved to render darkneſs viſible, and immediately retired to the Eaſt Tower, that he might forget in the blandiſhments of vice, the terrors of remorſe.

Still, however, thinking of his rival, Conrad, he began to conſider of the means by which that unfortunate youth might be removed from his fears, and rendered incapable by death of again becoming an obſtacle to his views. Revolving in his mind the various methods that might be employed, aſſaſſination appeared the ſureſt and the moſt ſecret. If he left him to periſh for want, ſuſpicion would moſt probably ariſe in the breaſts of his domeſtics, and the object of his hate might find the means of obtaining aſſiſtance and relief; other methods appeared equally objectionable, and he at length determined to deſtroy

him

him by ſecret aſſaſſination. His terror, however, would not permit him to enter the tower where Conrad was impriſoned, and therefore an agent muſt be employed. After much conſideration, Jaques appeared a fit inſtrument for the completion of ſuch a purpoſe, and immediately ſending for him, "I want you, Jaques," ſaid the Baron, "to perform an act, "which I ardently wiſh to have exe-"cuted, and for which your reward will "be certain, namely independence." The ſound of independence tranſported the ear of Jaques, who eagerly enquired, "What, my good Lord, is your "ſervant required to do."—"You muſt "firſt ſwear ſecrecy before I reveal to "you my purpoſe." Jaques trembled and heſitated. "Will you," ſaid the Baron, "enſure that independence which "I know you ardently deſire, or be

"hunted

" hunted from my caſtle an abject wan-
" derer without a home." The alternative terrified Jaques, and he eagerly promiſed compliance with all the demands of his maſter; he took the required oath, and the Baron continued, " the purpoſe I require you to execute, " is the aſſaſſination of Conrad. Do this, " and do it ſecretly and alone, and you " ſhall baſk in the ſunſhine of my fa-
" vour for the remainder of your life." Jaques trembled and heſitated, " But," continued the Baron, " if you refuſe, " you ſhall inſtantly quit my caſtle and " ſervice, and become an houſeleſs wan-
" derer upon the face of the earth." The fortitude of Jaques was too weak to reſiſt the united force of the promiſe and the threat of his maſter, and he now replied, " I will do the act, my " Lord, exactly in the manner you wiſh

" it

"it to be done."—"Here is the key, "take a poniard with you, and ſtab "him to the heart in the dead of night, "when you will moſt probably find him "aſleep, and leave the body upon the "ſpot where you inflict upon him his "death wound, for I ſhall myſelf enter "the tower to ſee that the work has "been properly performed."

Jaques retired to his chamber, and muſing upon the dreadful crime he was employed to commit, recoiled with horror from its contemplation, but the alternative the Baron had preſented to his mind, outweighed every ſentiment of virtue, and he determined to execute the deed, and gain the promiſed reward.

Drinking deep to drown the horror of reflection, he awaited in fearful ſuſpenſe the dead hour of night; at length

all

all was ſilence; and trembling, he ſeized a lanthern, and walked haſtily to the door leading to the dungeons beneath the Weſtern Tower. He turned the key, and began to open the door, violently trembling, a cold ſweat burſt from his forehead, and ſcarcely could his trembling arm pull towards him the door he had juſt unlocked. Deſcending a few ſteps, he fearfully ſtarted back; all the horror of his purpoſe ruſhed at once upon his mind, and overwhelmed him with terror and affright. At length again aſſuming courage, and concluding Conrad had taken refuge in one of the dungeons, he fearfully proceeded to the firſt, and ſtepping ſlowly and cautiouſly in, again terrified, ſtarted back, and fancied he perceived the object of his ſearch extended before him on the earth. But looking again, he perceived it to be only the

the deluſion of imagination, and returned into the paſſage. He now explored all the ſubterraneous apartments, and aſtoniſhed at not finding Conrad in any of them, knew not what to conjecture. Slowly returning towards the ſtairs, he accidentally perceived the door at the ſide; opening it with trepidation, he proceeded to explore the apartments, and frequently terrified at the contemplation of the crime he came to commit, and the recollection of the apparitions that were ſaid to haunt the Tower, he fancied he heard a footſtep behind him, and turning round with wild affright, would ſtand the victim of palpitating terror, unable to ſtill the univerſal trembling that invaded his frame. Unſucceſsful in his ſearch, he ventured to aſcend the ſtaircaſe, and endeavoured to force open a door which oppoſed him at the top of the

firſt flight, but all his efforts were fruitleſs, and he was forced to quit the attempt. He now ſearched the remaining rooms, and being unable to diſcover Conrad, concluded he muſt have eſcaped, but in what manner he was utterly unable to conjecture. Once more he endeavoured to force open the door he had before attempted, but his endeavours were ſtill unſucceſsful, and he found himſelf compelled to give up all thoughts of being enabled to effect the dire aſſa ſination, and returned to his apartment, after carefully locking the outer door, alternately depreſſed by ſorrow and elevated by joy. He grieved at the failure, becauſe it would daſh to the ground his darling hope of independence; but the ſmall remnant of virtue that ſtill found a refuge in his breaſt, inſtigated him to rejoice that he had eſcaped the crime of wanton and deliberate murder.

The

The Baron retired to his chamber of repoſe, with his mind full of the fell purpoſe that had agitated his breaſt, and unable to cloſe his eyes in ſleep, the victim of terror and remorſe, he anxiouſly waited for the morning's dawn, that he might learn from his agent the death of his hated rival.

At length, ariſing from his bed of thorns, he repaired to his apartment, and diſmiſſing the females who almoſt conſtantly attended him, ſummoned Jaques to his preſence. Trembling and agitated, his domeſtic appeared before him, and the Baron eagerly enquired if Conrad was no more. "My Lord," replied Jaques, "I carefully ſearched the dungeons, and "not finding him there, I wondered "where he could be got to; but per-"ceiving a door at the ſide of the ſtairs, "I entered it, and found it led to the

" upper apartments of the Weſt Tower;
" I ſearched them all, my Lord, with the
" utmoſt care, but could not find him,
" and I ſuppoſe he has eſcaped, my Lord,
" by ſome means or other." The Baron frowned tremendous anger upon his trembling domeſtic, and without ſpeaking, immediately commanded the attendance of a number of his retainers; and whilſt Jaques ſtood in trembling expectation, thundered with vehement rage to thoſe who appeared, " Seize that vil-
" lain, and impriſon him in one of the
" moſt gloomy dungeons beneath my
" caſtle; he has aſſiſted the traitor Con-
" rad, to eſcape from his confinement."
Jaques, terrified with the moſt horrid apprehenſions, would have implored for mercy, and was about to proteſt his innocence; but the Baron vehemently called out, " Take him away, or your
" lives

"lives ſhall pay the forfeit of your diſ-
"obedience." The retainers, little leſs affrighted than the trembling Jaques, inſtantly hurried him from the apartment, and conveying him to the dungeon adjoining to that where his old adverſary Pierre was confined, left him to meditate upon the inſtability of fortune.

The Baron was now again become the prey of terror and apprehenſion; he doubted not from the relation of Jaques, that Conrad had actually eſcaped, aſſiſted by his treacherous domeſtic, and now trembled with fear at the proſpect of the revenge which his rival might be inſtigated to attempt. He had impriſoned Jaques and Pierre, and ſuſpicious of all his domeſtics, he knew not whom to truſt; at length he recollected Rufus, who was now tottering beneath the weight of years, but who had been formerly the

careful ſuperintendant of his houſehold; and, if report ſpoke true, had been employed by him to execute ſome diſmal purpoſe. For ſome years paſt he had ſecluded himſelf in his chamber, and refuſed all communication with the other domeſtics; to ſome of whom he was unknown, and by moſt was forgotten. The Baron ordered him to be allowed every comfort and convenience that could aſſuage the infirmities of age, and ſometimes viſited him in his chamber, where he conſtantly remained, and allowing himſelf nouriſhment juſt ſufficient to ſupport exiſtence, lived a recluſe from all ſocial enjoyment.

To him the Baron now repaired; Rufus turned pale at his appearance, whilſt the former opened the purpoſe of his viſit, and endeavoured to perſuade him to take upon himſelf again the ſuperintendancy

perintendancy of his houſehold. Rufus long reſiſted; but overcome by the ſolicitations of his maſter, at length conſented, and deſcending from the apartment which he had not quitted for years paſt, again reſumed all the activity his declining years would permit, and aſtoniſhed the domeſtics by his appearance amongſt them.

Having ſecured the ſuperintendancy of Rufus, he ordered the ſtrict guard at the caſtle gates, and door leading to the dungeons, to be reſumed; it had been for a little while remitted, or at leaſt thoſe appointed to the duty had become leſs vigilant, in conſequence of not apprehending further danger; but the Baron, now in continual fear of the attempts of Conrad, ordered the ſtrict watch that had been kept to be renewed, and not intermitted for a ſingle moment, whilſt he

diſpatched ſeveral of his retainers in purſuit of the fugitive.

Having become a little calmer, from the precaution he had taken againſt the attempts of his rival to reſcue Matilda, he determined to deſcend and viſit that unfortunate maiden, for the purpoſe of diſcovering if the confinement ſhe had already experienced, had bent her mind to compliance with his deſires.

Taking with him a torch, and accompanied by two females, he deſcended to the paſſage, and was ſtruck with amazement at ſeeing the door of her dungeon a little opened; trembling, he darted in, and a youth was kneeling at her feet, in the attitude of adoring love. The conception and execution of his rage was immediate; he did not doubt it was Conrad, his favoured rival, and drawing his ſword, he inſtantly plunged it to the heart

heart of the object of his fury, who fell upon his face and immediately expired. He had not heard the footsteps of the Baron, and now before he was aware of his approach, lay extended upon the earth, a breathless corpse at his feet. Matilda uttered a loud and piercing scream, and fell senseless upon the ground. The females who had accompanied the Baron, remained without the dungeon, and now were called in by him, to assist in recovering her; but themselves affrighted at what they beheld, and violently trembling, had nearly fainted, and were wholly unable to afford her aid. The Baron was himself, in spite of his callous feelings, appalled at the act he had been hurried on by rage to commit; and raising Matilda from the earth, with what little assistance his trembling attendants could afford, conveyed her to the

upper apartments, leaving the corpſe in the dungeon, weltering in its blood.

The Baron retired, rather agitated with terror, accompanied by two females, to his apartment, leaving the reſt to recover Matilda from her ſwoon. Their efforts at length ſucceeded, and the lovely maid opened her eyes; but overwhelmed by terror at the murderous act ſhe had witneſſed, had nearly again ſunk into inſenſibility, and remained for a conſiderable time in a weak and languid ſtate.

Conrad in the mean time awaking from the ſound ſleep he had enjoyed, became abſorbed in reflection upon the ſtrange incident of the preceding night. The repetition of the deluſion was ſo remarkable a phenomenon, that he could not avoid thinking it was deſigned for ſome purpoſes of diſcovery, and again with

with anxious curioſity he explored the tapeſtry towards which the figure had pointed. But a minute examination led to no diſcovery, and again diſappointed, he ſtill concluded it to be only the reverie of a diſtempered imagination.

Another day of ſolitude was commenced in his priſon, and he began to wonder at not being taken from his impriſonment, for the purpoſe of undergoing the proceſs of examination before the Baron. He inſpected his ſtock of proviſions, and found it much diminiſhed. The fear of being impriſoned there, for the purpoſe of his being ſilently deſtroyed, now darted into his mind. What was to hinder the Baron from detaining him until he periſhed for want, or from ſending ſome one ſecretly to aſſaſſinate him! Certainly no ſentiment of virtue or feeling of compaſſion. The helpleſſneſs of

his ſituation ſtruck him with terror, and flying to the door which led to the ſtaircaſe, from the range of apartments he now partly occupied, he made it faſt, for the purpoſe of preventing the intruſion of thoſe viſitants whom, from the relentleſs ferocity of the Baron, his fears now led him to expect.

He determined to huſband his allotment of proviſions, that he might make them laſt as long as poſſible; and by endeavouring to preſerve his life, he ſtill hoped for deliverance from his wrongs, and a developement of the myſtery in which he was involved.

With ſomewhat more confidence, he retired to his chamber of repoſe, and truſting he ſhould not again ſee the fearful viſion that had appalled him, he extended himſelf upon his bed, and endeavoured to cloſe his eyes in ſleep.

He

He could not prevent, however, the recollection of the figure from intruding upon his mind, and was unable for some time to overpower its remembrance. At length ſinking into a ſlumber, the fair form once more appeared, and looking at him with greater ſternneſs, pointed again to the tapeſtry. He aroſe, trembling with fright, but ſtill it was illuſion, and darkneſs pervaded the room. Muſing fearfully upon the continued repetition of the appearance, and the ſternneſs with which the figure contemplated him, as if angry at not underſtanding its ſign, he firmly determined to tear down the oppoſite tapeſtry, and by an examination ſtill more minute than thoſe he had inſtituted, endeavour to diſcover the reaſon, if any was to be found, of the appearance that had haunted him. Soon afterwards he became abſorbed in ſleep, and it was

now the aſſaſſin Jaques entered the Tower, and endeavoured to force the door, which Conrad, with a preſentiment of danger, had carefully faſtened. The ſoundneſs of Conrad's ſleep prevented him from hearing the vain efforts of Jaques.

Awaking in the morning, he remembered his determination, after the third time ſeeing the female figure ſo much reſembling himſelf, and reſolved to carry it immediately into execution. Proceeding to the tapeſtry, on the ſide of the room oppoſite to that where he had placed his bed, he tore down the whole of it, and removed it from the ſpot. In doing this he perceived a key behind it, upon the floor, and taking it up, attentively examined the wall, to diſcover, if he could, ſome veſtige of a door. He at length perceived ſomething like a key hole, and looking

looking more minutely, was convinced of its reality, though nearly choaked up with dirt. On removing this, he tried the key he had juſt found, and after repeated efforts, puſhed back the bolt of the lock, and perceived it to belong to a door which fitted ſo nicely in the wall, as to elude a very minute obſervation. He endeavoured to open it, and after ſeveral ſucceſſive attempts, it yielded to his ſtrength, and pulling it open, he diſcovered, with the utmoſt horror, two human ſkeletons within, which appeared to have been placed, one on each ſide, in a reclining poſition. He contemplated the melancholy appearance for a ſhort time, whilſt an univerſal tremor ſhook his limbs, and ſome of the bones fell forward into the room: ſtill more terrified, he haſtily quitted the apartment, and hurried into the room he had appropriated

propriated for his daily reſidence; at length, again reſuming his courage, he once more entered the diſmal apartment, determining to make a thorough ſearch amongſt the various articles it contained, ſuppoſing he might find ſome clue to guide him to the knowledge of the perſons, whoſe remains he had juſt before contemplated, and whom there was now little doubt, had been inhumanly murdered.

Carefully examining a number of articles, that had been confuſedly jumbled together by the falling of the bedſtead, he found a ſword, which was now become extremely ruſty, and ſhortly afterwards a ſmall portrait, which ſtrikingly reſembled his father. He looked at it for a conſiderable time with much anxious attention, and though it was evidently not intended for his father, yet the ſimi-

litude

litude was great, and filled him with amazement. Added to the reſemblance between the portrait he found, which bore ſo great a ſimilitude to himſelf, and the imaginary figure he had ſeen for three ſucceſſive nights, it formed a combination of circumſtances that ſeemed intended for ſome purpoſe of diſcovery, and gave riſe to a number of conjectures in his mind, which occupied it the greater part of the day, but from which no certain concluſion reſulted.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

THE Baron, though at firſt agitated by the commiſſion of the bloody deed, now exulted in the murder of his rival, and ſent for Matilda, to triumph over her ſorrow, and enjoy the paroxyſm of her grief. She ſoon appeared, ſtill languid and pale, and ſcarcely recovered from the effect of her terror. Exultingly he ſaid, "My lovely Matilda, your love, "I hope, is now transferable, as its "former object has ceaſed to exiſt." Matilda concluded, from his words, he had in reality ſent forth the fiat for the deſtruction of her Conrad, and that the lord of her affections was actually no more.

The

The ſhock added to her former fright, had nearly overpowered her ſenſes, and with difficulty ſhe ſaved herſelf from falling to the ground, but preſerving her firmneſs, ſhe replied, "It is well, "my Lord, my miſeries will ſoon be at "an end, and I ſhall be united with "Conrad, where your injuſtice can no "longer reach us; but when deſcending "childleſs to the grave, you may per-"haps repent, too late, of the depraved "enormity of your conduct." "Child-"leſs! what mean you by that Ma-"tilda?" retorted the Baron. "And "can you, O Baron de Umfreville, aſk "that queſtion, when you have plunged "the murderous ſteel into the heart of "him to whom you gave exiſtence, and "bereft your ſon of life?" The Baron ſtarted from his ſeat with terror and affright, and wildly ſtaring upon Matilda, called

called out, "My ſon!" Matilda, from his manner, void of diſſimulation and art, now concluded he had miſtaken his ſon for Conrad, and ſaid, "Yes, my Lord, "his breathleſs corpſe now lies extended "in the dungeon where lately you ſo "unjuſtly and cruelly confined me, wel-"tering in its blood; your criminal in-"tentions have been puniſhed by the "commiſſion of a crime, doubly produc-"tive of miſery to yourſelf." The Baron was now abſorbed in fearful meditation, and looking wildly around him, was ſcarcely conſcious of her preſence, and Matilda, glad of the oportunity, withdrew unheeded from his apartment.

Overwhelmed by terror, he immediately retired to his conſtant refuge, the Eaſt Tower, and endeavoured to forget its cauſe; but his murdered ſon was continually preſent to his ſight, until viewing

ing him as his rival, if not in the affections of Matilda, at leaſt in his attempts to triumph over her innocence, he rejoiced in the deed, and exulted at the removal of him who might have fruſtrated his deſigns, and even the conſideration of dying without an heir was outweighed by the jealous rage of the moment.

Arthur de Umfreville, who had thus untimely met his fate, had concerted with Jaques, a ſcheme, wherein it was agreed to intoxicate the domeſtics, who kept guard at the door leading to the dungeons, and whilſt Jaques ſtayed behind, employing the Baron's time relative to the buſineſs of his houſehold, Arthur was to proceed forward through the ſubterraneous paſſages, in diſguiſe, and, entering the Eaſt Tower, which he ſuppoſed would not now be difficult, carry off Matilda. The expreſſion of Conrad, how-

ever,

ever, that Matilda was ſtill alive, and confined within the walls of the Caſtle, had gone forth amongſt the houſehold, and excited ſuch a general deteſtation and abhorrence of the Baron's conduct, that Arthur no longer conſidered ſecrecy neceſſary, and ſounding different domeſtics, he diſcovered, or thought he diſcovered, ſuch a contempt and diſlike for his father, that in addition to wreſting from him Matilda, he conceived the daring project of impriſoning him for life, and under pretence of acting in his name, uſurp in reality all his rights and prerogatives.

The conſpiracy was formed, nearly all the domeſtics were parties, and the morrow's ſun was to have riſen upon the Baron de Umfreville, deſpoiled of his wealth and his power—a ſhadow of authority, and a priſoner in his own Caſtle.

Arthur,

Arthur, however, determined firſt to bring away Matilda from the priſon, and ſhewing her to the domeſtics, diſplay in the ſtrongeſt light the perfidy of their maſter, and fix the minds of thoſe who might waver from their purpoſe.

Jaques was ignorant of the plot that was now formed; Arthur having ſecured the other domeſtics, wanted not his aſſiſtance, for having keys in his poſſeſſion, he did not require thoſe held by Jaques, and wiſhed to evade the performance of the promiſe he had formerly made him, and thus the former acceded to the Baron's propoſal relative to the aſſaſſination of Conrad, when if he had known of the conſpiracy, he would have conſidered his promiſes as nugatory and uſeleſs.

Arthur, in purſuance of the firſt part of his ſcheme, entered into the ſubterranean paſſages, and proceeding onward until

until he came to that from whence the ſtairs aſcended to the Eaſt Tower, he thought he heard a female voice; liſtening attentively, he plainly heard a ſigh, which ſeemed to proceed from one of the dungeons. Surprized at this, it darted into his mind, that Matilda might probably be confined in one of theſe ſubterraneous apartments, as a puniſhment for the inflexible firmneſs of her virtue; and having brought with him only the keys neceſſary to open the two doors in his way, he haſtened back for more. Soon after, returning to the ſpot, he tried the lock belonging to the door of the dungeon from whence the ſigh ſeemed to proceed, and after endeavouring to turn ſeveral keys, at length found one which opened it, and puſhing back the door, he diſcovered, by the faint glimmer of a ſmall lamp, Matilda ſitting upon a ſtone projecting on one ſide from the wall.

Matilda

Matilda concluded it was her tyrannic gaoler who was again come to pay her a viſit, and ſat with a firm indifference, prepared for the worſt. Greatly ſurprized at ſeeing Arthur before her, ſhe had not time to recover herſelf before he was kneeling at her feet. "Lovely "Matilda," ſaid the inſidious Arthur, tenderly ſeizing her hand, "fly with me "directly; I am come to lead you tri-"umphantly to freedom and to ſplen-"dour." Matilda was about to reply, and Arthur was intently gazing upon her lovely features, when the Baron entered the dungeon, and before Arthur, with an eagerly engaged attention, and faſcinated imagination, was aware of his approach, unknowingly inflicted upon him that wound which cauſed his inſtant death without a ſtruggle or a groan.

The domeſtics wondered their young Lord

Lord did not return, and began to ſuſpect their plot had been diſcovered, and themſelves to be in imminent danger; each concluded himſelf to be betrayed by the other, and thus becoming diſunited and unconnected, the Baron had unknowingly deſtroyed the conſpiracy, which was on the eve of abſorbing him in its vortex, and depriving him of the power he tyrannically exerciſed, and the wealth he ſhamefully abuſed.

Conrad in the mean time perceived his proviſions to be nearly exhauſted, and began in reality to dread he ſhould be left there to periſh for want. Under the influence of this fear, he haſtened from his apartment, and proceeding towards the door that ſeparated him from the inhabited part of the caſtle, knocked loudly, and called for a freſh ſupply of proviſions.

Rufus

Rufus was at no great diſtance, and being ignorant of any one being confined there, upon hearing the knocking, and the ſound of a voice whoſe words he could not diſtinguiſh, became extremely agitated, and pale and trembling haſtened, as much as his infirmities would allow, amongſt the reſt of the domeſtics; tottering into a chair, he ſat down, overpowered by the tremor that had ſeized him. The domeſtics crouded around him, whilſt Conrad knocking louder at the door, the ſound reached their ears, and having heard that Conrad had eſcaped, they were little leſs affrighted than the terrified Rufus. "Good God," ſaid the latter, "what have I to anſwer for!" Wondering at his words, and the noiſe ſtill continuing, they ſtood ſilently about him, and did not dare to ſtir, whilſt they feared to remain. Rufus, after a long

pauſe, aſked if they had been in the habit of hearing the noiſe that now fearfully ſounded upon his ear; one of the domeſtics anſwered him in the negative. "My God," replied Rufus, "they know "I am here, and are calling for ven- "geance upon my devoted head;" and becoming the victim of the moſt gloomy terror, he ſat fearfully muſing, whilſt the domeſtics looked at him with amazement, until become extremely indiſpoſed from the effect of his fright, he requeſted to be led to the chamber he had ſo lately quitted, and expreſſed a firm determination never again to deſcend the ſtaircaſe and encounter a renewal of the horrors that now agitated his mind.

The Baron, amid the meretricious pleaſures he now endeavoured to partake of, could not prevent his mind from frequently recurring to the contemplation of

of the enormities which crouded thick into the review of his conduct. At length remorse seized upon his mind, and he resolved upon penitence; but the more he reflected, the higher he ascended in the scale of horror, until overwhelmed by despair, he fiercely determined to plunge deeper and deeper into the abyss of vice, and set at defiance even the appearance of virtue.

In this mood of despairing vice, he retired to the apartment devoted to his pleasures, and sent for Matilda. All hope of relief had now quitted her mind, and she repaired to his presence, firmly prepared to meet the enormities of his conduct. Rudely seizing her hand, he pulled her towards him, and seating her by his side, asked with stern severity, "Well, Matilda, have you resolved upon "compliance with my desires." "No,

" my Lord," ſhe replied, " nor never " will." " Weak and fooliſh girl," returned the Baron, " are you ignorant " that I can obtain by force, what your " pretended virtue refuſes to give." " I " know it well, my Lord, but that threat " will not enſure my compliance." " Then, by Saint Mark," vehemently retorted the Baron, " power ſhall confer " upon me what perſuaſion cannot," and rudely proceeding to indecent liberties, imprinted upon her lovely boſom an unhallowed kiſs. Matilda, indignant at her wrongs, immediately determined to revenge them in his blood. Already were all the beauties of her boſom expoſed to profane gaze, by the rude hands of her mercileſs raviſher; and already had her trembling hand ſeized the dagger to draw it from concealment, and plunge it to his heart, when the Baron ſtarted back,

back, pale and affrighted, and trembling with agitation; Matilda looked with wondering eyes upon his terror, whilſt he haſtily retired from the apartment.

Amazed at ſuch conduct, and finding herſelf alone, ſhe immediately aroſe to retire again to her chamber, but her tyrant had taken effectual precautions againſt her eſcape; a ſpring, of which ſhe was ignorant, faſtened the door, and all her efforts failed to open it. Thus diſappointed, ſhe was compelled to return to her ſeat, and wait with firmneſs the return of him who had ſo unaccountably quitted her. At length he again entered the room, and to her no ſmall aſtoniſhment, led in Annette. Unable to account for ſuch an incident, ſhe flew into the arms of her parent, who trembled and embraced her, whilſt ſhe ſeemed agitated to exceſs.

The Baron immediately began ſternly to interrogate Annette. "Is Matilda," ſaid he, "really your daughter?" Annette heſitated, and ſeemed loth to reply. With a greater degree of ſternneſs he repeated the demand, "Is ſhe your "daughter? anſwer me this inſtant, or "force ſhall compel you." Annette, trembling, burſt into tears, and kneeling at his feet implored his pardon, and at length replied to his interrogatory, "No, "my Lord, ſhe is not my daughter." "Whoſe is ſhe then?" ſaid the Baron, with tremulous agitation. "Alas! my "Lord, I know not; ſhe was ſold to "me when an infant, by a woman beg- "ging about the country, and I know "nothing further about her." At this inſtant, Jeane, a domeſtic, knocked at the door, and called aloud to the Baron, "My Lord, a beggar woman is at the

"caſtle

" caſtle gates, importunately demanding " admiſſion; ſhe is very ill, and ſays ſhe " has important information to give you " concerning your daughter." " Bring " her inſtantly to my preſence," replied the Baron, with eager anxiety.

Jeane immediately retired; Annette was ſtill upon her knees, imploring the compaſſion of the Baron, who now raiſed her up, and roughly told her to be pacified, whilſt Matilda looked alternately upon Annette and the Baron, and aſtoniſhed knew not what to conjecture. The Baron now led Matilda into an adjoining apartment, and commanded Annette to follow. Jeane ſoon after returned, leading in a female, pale and emaciated, and exhibiting in her dreſs and the ſqualidneſs of her appearance, every mark of miſery and diſtreſs.

The Baron and Annette immediately recognized her, altered as ſhe was. The former as the mother of Marianne, who had reluctantly conſented to ſacrifice her daughter to his pleaſures, and the latter as the female to whom ſhe was indebted for Matilda. The beggar woman was much agitated at the ſight of Annette and the Baron, and ſinking into a chair, was with difficulty preſerved from a ſwoon. At length ſhe became a little recovered, and falling at the feet of the Baron, implored his pardon. Impatient to agitation, he vociferated in her ears, "Wo-"man, what have you to relate to me "concerning my daughter?" "O, my "Lord," replied the pale and trembling ſupplicant, at his feet, "firſt grant me "your Lordſhip's pardon, or I cannot "reveal it." "You have it," retorted the

the Baron, " I pledge my honour for its " being granted to you; proceed imme- " diately, and relieve my ſuſpenſe."

Her ſpirits now drooped, and ſhe found herſelf unable to ſpeak. The Baron impatiently called for a cordial, which on being adminiſtered, revived languid animation, and ſomewhat recovered, ſhe at length proceeded, whilſt the heart of Matilda palpitated with eager anxiety, and Annette ſtood liſtening with aſtoniſhed attention. " You may " remember, my Lord," ſaid the woman, " ſome nineteen or twenty years agone, " me and my huſband ſold to your Lord- " ſhip our daughter Marianne." " I " did not want to hear about Marianne," interrupted the Baron, " but of my " daughter!" " My Lord," ſhe con- " tinued, " the ſtory about your Lord- " ſhip's daughter is connected with that

" of mine: It was on that day, my " Lord, when we brought Marianne to " this caſtle—(alas! it was a fatal day " to us)—it was on that day, my Lord, " that, enraged at being compelled to " part with my daughter, in ſo baſe a " manner, I ſtole your Lordſhip's, un- " perceived as it lay aſleep; when we " returned to our cottage, and my huſ- " band came to know what I had done, " he was in a fury of rage, and threat- " ened to murder me; but as it was " dangerous to ſtay upon your Lord- " ſhip's eſtate, after what we had done, " I perſuaded him to depart, taking along " with us your Lordſhip's daughter, and " the money we had ſo baſely received " for our Marianne. Proceeding upon " our journey we were attacked by rob- " bers, who took from us all the money " and every thing we had, except the

" clothes

" clothes upon our backs. Reduced to
" diſtreſs by this misfortune, we wan-
" dered about the country, my Lord,
" begging for our bread. Happening to
" paſs the cottage of Colin and Annette,
" we begged at the door, and Annette,
" who had not long lain in, but whoſe
" child was juſt dead, propoſed to buy
" your Lordſhip's daughter, whom I had
" in my arms, and make her huſband,
" who was abſent, believe it was ſtill the
" ſame. Being in the greateſt diſtreſs, I
" agreed to part with her, and ſold her to
" Annette. Afterwards, my Lord, we
" wandered about, and ſometimes my
" huſband was employed, and ſometimes
" not; but we were always poor and diſ-
" treſſed. I told my huſband it was a
" judgment upon us, for cruelly ſelling
" our daughter, and he became ſullen
" and moroſe, and hardly ever ſpoke a

" word to me. Soon afterwards he was " ſeized with a lingering illneſs, and " lingered for ſome years in the greateſt " tortures, and then died in agonies of " pain and deſpair. I have been for ſome " time in a declining way, and knowing " my end to be faſt approaching, I could " not die in peace until I came to inform " your Lordſhip of the theft I committed, " that you might take ſteps to recover " your loſt daughter. She had a pecu- " liar mark, my Lord." " I know it " well," ſaid the Baron, " and this is " her," taking Matilda by the hand. Annette again fell at his feet, and proteſted her ignorance of Matilda's being his daughter. " I did not inform her of " it, my Lord," ſaid the beggar woman, " but paſſed off the child as my own."

Matilda was ſtruck with amazement and terror; to find herſelf the daughter of a

man

man who had educated her for the purpoſes of brutal ſenſuality, who had been the cruel tyrant over her perſon and her affections, and was about to become her mercileſs raviſher, whom ſhe had contemplated with horror, contempt, and diſguſt, and had already ſeized the dagger to deſtroy, overpowered her feelings, and ſhe ſunk at his feet ſcarce knowing what ſhe did. The Baron immediately raiſed her from the ground, and, ſtruck with horror at the criminality of his conduct, and the double crime of blackeſt die he was on the point of committing, whilſt headlong purſuing the purpoſes of vice, hardly dared to beſtow upon her his bleſſing.

He now diſmiſſed the beggar woman, whoſe name was Mary, and commanded her to be taken care of; and her remaining days, which, from her appearance, promiſed to be but few and ſhort, rendered

ed as comfortable as poſſible. Annette was likewiſe ſent back to her huſband, and the Baron remained alone with his daughter Matilda.

They looked at each for a conſiderable time, each remaining ſilent. In the boſom of Matilda, the reverence due from a daughter to her parent was now ſtrugling for pre eminence, with the deteſtation of his character, that had previouſly become the inmate of her mind; whilſt the Baron at once aſhamed of his conduct, and reviewing it with fearful horror, hardly dared to ſpeak to the daughter he had ſo lately recovered. At length he broke the long continued ſilence: "Ma-"tilda," ſaid he, "my ſon is no more!" The circumſtances attendant upon his murder now ruſhed upon his memory, and overwhelmed him with horror; for ſome time he was unable to proceed.

Somewhat

Somewhat recovering, however, he continued: "You are now ſole heireſs to the "fortunes of my houſe, and it is to you "I muſt look for a continuation of my "race. As the daughter of the illuſtri- "ous Baron de Umfreville, you muſt "think no longer of the humble and low "born Conrad, and I will endeavour to "fix upon ſome wealthy and powerful "neighbouring chief for your huſband, "who, with the gift of your hand, will "inherit at my death the vaſt domains of "Umfreville, and by their union with "his own poſſeſſions render the deſcend- "ants of Umfreville ſtill more powerful "and illuſtrious." The addreſs of her father penetrated her boſom with the moſt lively ſorrow. The image of Conrad was engraven upon her heart never to be effaced, and ſhe immediately replied, "I will not, my Lord, beſtow my hand without

" without my heart, and ſooner will I
" give up all the riches and honours that
" now thickly bloſſom around me, and
" retire to ſome ſequeſtered cottage with
" the man of my heart, where, at leaſt,
" I ſhall enjoy what is infinitely preferable
" to wealth and honours, and what they
" cannot confer—content, than live in
" affluence and ſplendor with him I can-
" not love." The Baron frowned.—
" The habits of your life, Matilda," ſaid
he, " previouſly to your entering my
" manſion, have tinctured your mind
" with plebeian ſentiments and inclina-
" tions, but a ſhort reſidence amidſt the
" brilliant ſplendour that now awaits you,
" will render you more attentive to the
" ſuggeſtions of propriety and prudence."
" If propriety and prudence conſiſt, my
" Lord, in affecting ſenſations that I do
" not feel, and forgetting the obliga-
" tion

" tion of the tendereſt vows, I ſincerely " hope their admonitions will never in- " fluence my mind."—" Pſha, pſha, Ma- " tilda," replied the Baron, " you will " think differently ſoon." " But perhaps, " my Lord, even now, whilſt I am " declaring my affection, you have wi- " dowed my virgin vows by the death of " my beloved Conrad." " Conrad ſtill " lives!" angrily replied her father, " for " any thing I know to the contrary, and " has eſcaped from the Caſtle."

At this moment Jeane haſtily entered the room pale and trembling, and ſaid to the Baron, " My Lord, my Lord, a loud " knocking has been heard at the door " leading to the Weſt Tower where " Conrad was confined by your Lordſhip's " orders, and was ſaid to have eſcaped, " and Rufus was ſo frightened at it that " he has gone up ſtairs to his apartment

" very

" very ill, and it continues ſo violently, " pleaſe your Lordſhip, that we are all " frightened to death, and dare not ſtir " about the Caſtle, and I'm come, pleaſe " your Lordſhip, to take your Lordſhip's " orders concerning what is to be done " in the caſe." The Baron trembled and turned pale; whilſt Matilda, who had eagerly caught the ſound of Conrad's confinement, now intreated her father to releaſe him: " O, my father!" ſaid ſhe, " depend upon it he has not eſcaped; " releaſe him,—for my ſake releaſe him " from his impriſonment; indeed he has " deſerved no puniſhment!" The thought of Conrad being ſtill in confinement in the Weſt Tower, notwithſtanding what Jaques had related to him, ſomewhat allayed the terror of the Baron, and tho' angry at his daughter's earneſt ſolicitation, he had no plauſible reaſon to alledge

for

for a continuance of his impriſonment; and, giving the key to the domeſtic who ſtood before him, commanded him to open the door, and if Conrad was ſtill there to releaſe him from confinement, ſecretly reſolving at the ſame time to prevent all communication between him and his daughter.

The diſcovery of Matilda's being the daughter of the Baron, was now noiſed over the Caſtle; and aſtoniſhment ſeized the minds of the domeſtics, whilſt the violent knocking at the door of the Weſt Tower, at every interval, filled them with terror; and afraid of moving from their places, they remained all huddled together, ſtill creeping cloſer to each other at every knock, and tremblingly looking round with fearful diſmay.

Jeane returned from the preſence of the Baron, bearing the key of the dread-

ful

ful Tower; and on opening the door where his fellow domeſtics were aſſembled, loud ſcreams and fearful ejaculations met his ear, and made him ſtart back aghaſt and pale with horror. The domeſtics, in the height of their fear, fancied ſome dreadful apparition had opened the door, and was now ſtalking in, with tremendous aſpect. Gradually they recovered the proper uſe of their ſight, and were at length convinced it was one of their brother domeſtics, who now made his appearance.

Upon becoming acquainted with the commands of the Baron, all were penetrated with fear and tremblingly heſitated, none daring to move towards the place from whence iſſued the dreadful ſounds. At length Jeane, who was in poſſeſſion of the key, and likewiſe of ſomewhat more courage than the reſt, offered to lead the way,

way, and they conſented to follow him in a body.

The knocking ſtill loudly and violently continued, and after frequently ſtarting back, and heſitating in their progreſs, they at length arrived at the door. The noiſe now ceaſed, and their leader pale and trembling applied the key to the lock, he turned it, and ſeized with terror, quitted his hold, and retreated terrified, towards the other domeſtics, who ſtood at a reſpectful diſtance. The door now unlocked, was puſhed open, and they all precipitately fled, haſtily followed by their courageous leader.

Conrad, for it was him who now forced open the door, had quite exhauſted his proviſions, and continued to knock, in hopes of inducing ſome of the domeſtics to enquire into his wants, and furniſh him with a freſh ſupply. Hearing a great

a great number of footſteps near the door, he concluded they were proceeding to carry him into the preſence of the Baron for examination, and conſcious that reſiſtance would be uſeleſs, he ceaſed knocking, and quietly awaited his fate. The door being unlocked and no one attempting to open it, he ventured himſelf, to perform that office, and now walked from his priſon aſtoniſhed at the precipitate flight of the domeſtics; and unable to gueſs the cauſe. Previous to quitting the tower, as he walked along the dark paſſage towards the ſtairs, his foot kicked againſt ſomething on the floor, which, upon taking up, proved to be a dagger, and on examining it, near the light, he found the name of "Rufus" inſcribed upon its handle. This, as well as the other dagger, the ſword and portrait which he had found, he attached to his

his dreſs, and now brought away with him from the tower.

No one attempting to ſtop him, he locked the door, and conveying the key into his pocket, he ſlowly followed the army of domeſtics, who had ſo precipitately fled from the dreadful motion of the door. Some of them ventured to look round, but the paſſage was rather dark, and their fears immediately magnifying Conrad into a dreadful apparition, added ſpeed to their feet, whilſt he, aſtoniſhed at their conduct, now loudly called to them, but the ſound of his voice only added to their terror, and without farther ſtopping, they fled to their common room, from whence they had proceeded to the attack of the Weſt Tower.

Conrad ſlowly walked onwards towards their place of aſſembly, and opening the door

door, found the domeſtics croſſing themſelves with the utmoſt devotion, and uttering Ave-marias with rapid and trembling tone. Succeeding at length in undeceiving their fears, they became convinced of his reality, and heartily congratulated him upon his releaſe, which was ſo utterly unlooked for by Conrad, that he could ſcarcely believe them ſerious; but Jeane, who had received his maſter's orders for his enlargement, imparted them to him, and he now learnt with aſtoniſhment, that his beloved Matilda was diſcovered to be the daughter of the Baron.

His aſtoniſhment at the event ſoon gave place to ſorrow. The humility of his own ſituation, contraſted with the ſplendour that now environed his Matilda, made him ſhrink within himſelf, dejected and melancholy, at the ſmall portion of hope

hope which now remained of an union with the dear object of his affections. He did not doubt her love, but alas! how was the consent of the haughty Baron de Umfreville, proud of his birth, his power, and his wealth, to be obtained to the marriage of his daughter, with a humble plebeian, destitute of all those advantages, that alone rendered man estimable in his sight. Pensive he retired to his chamber, and gloomily reflected upon the unfortunate course the tenor of his life seemed to pursue.

Jeane, who had unlocked the door of the Western Tower, obtaining the key from Conrad, now repaired into the presence of the Baron, and signified his release; Matilda was still with him, and testified her joy in a manner that offended the haughty spirit of the Baron, and fixed his resolution of preventing their meet-

ing. Being now convinced of the innocence of Jaques, relative to the ſuppoſed eſcape of Conrad, and by no means ſorry that the guilty purpoſe for which he had employed him, had been fruſtrated, he ſent Jeane to Rufus for the keys of the dungeons, and ordered him to be immediately releaſed.

Jaques, whilſt immerſed in the gloom of his dungeon, heartily repented of the plot he had laid for the purpoſe of deceiving the Baron into a belief of the treaſon of Pierre, and now, on being admitted into the preſence of his maſter, aſſerted the innocence of the latter, and pleaded in excuſe for his own conduct, an accidental miſtake. The Baron reprimanded Jaques for making unfounded aſſertions, and there being now no charge againſt Pierre, he ordered him alſo to be releaſed.

Jeane

Jeane now ventured to mention to his maſter the ſudden diſappearance of Arthur de Umfreville, and the aſtoniſhment of the domeſtics concerning it. The Baron turned pale, and at length replied, "He has been accidentally killed in one "of the dungeons, let his body be "ſought for, that it may be properly "interred." Jeane immediately retired, and with a number of his fellow domeſtics, deſcended to the ſubterranean apartments, and bringing up with them the body of Arthur, the ſight of it excited no ſmall ſhare of terror and diſmay, amongſt the houſehold. It was now not doubted by any one that their plot had been diſcovered, and Arthur fallen a ſacrifice to the rage of the Baron, excited by the treachery of one of the conſpirators. All ſuſpected all; and the Baron, deteſted as he was, now remained in

perfect ſecurity, reſting upon the mutual ſuſpicions of his domeſtics.

The Baron now allotted to his newly diſcovered daughter, the apartments lately poſſeſſed by her deceaſed brother, together with a number of attendants, who were all ſtrictly charged to bar the entrance of Conrad, and not permit Matilda to leave her apartments, without his expreſs permiſſion.

Conrad, learning the fate of Arthur, became ſtill more depreſſed, viewing Matilda as the ſole heireſs of the vaſt domains of Umfreville, the ſmall portion of hope that had clung to his mind of an union with the lovely maid, now nearly vaniſhed. To gain her father's conſent, was indeed, an impoſſibility, and doubtleſs he would marry her before death cloſed his proſpects. Under this depreſſion of ſpirits, he had almoſt for-

gotten

gotten the myſterious circumſtances that had occurred in the Weſt Tower, and now recollecting the dagger he had laſt found, with the name of Rufus inſcribed on it, he enquired of the domeſtics if any one then lived in the caſtle of that name, and being anſwered in the affirmative, and directed to his apartment, immediately aſcended thither.

Gaining admiſſion into his apartment, he found the old man in bed, much indiſpoſed, who looked at him with a conſiderable degree of terror impreſſed upon his countenance, and at length, overpowered by an agitation, his feeble body was now unable to ſupport, he fainted, and fell back upon his pillow. Conrad alarmed at his illneſs, ſummoned aſſiſtance to his aid, and after ſome time, Rufus again opened his eyes, and fixing them upon

Conrad, had nearly once more fainted away; perceiving his preſence to be the cauſe of the old man's agitation and terror, he immediately retired, ſtill more involved in myſtery than when he entered the room.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

MATILDA ſoon diſcovered ſhe had only changed her priſon, and was now equally intended by pride, to be debarred from all intercourſe with the man of her heart, as ſhe was before by ſelfiſh deſire; thinking however her preſent confinement might not be ſo impenetrable as the laſt, ſhe determined to make uſe of every endeavour to obtain an interview with him, who ſhe was convinced muſt be ardently deſirous of the favour. Margaret was her chief female attendant, who rejoiced at meeting again with a

gave notice of the approach of the Baron, and Conrad ſeizing her hand, and preſſing it tenderly to his lips, haſtily withdrew to his own apartment.

The Baron returned penſive and ſorrowful; remorſe penetrated his mind with anguiſh the moſt poignant and acute, and repairing to his apartment in melancholy mood, he ſent for Matilda, to diſſipate in her converſation, a part of the chagrin that overwhelmed him. "Well, "Matilda," ſaid the Baron, "have you "thought again of what I ſaid to you, "concerning marriage?" Matilda heſitated, and at length replied, "my af- "fections, my Lord, are fixed, and I "will not act contrary to their dictates." "That is mere nonſenſe, Matilda, but "you will know better before it is long; "to give you an opportunity, however, "of making a choice, I will invite all "the

" the neighbouring chiefs to a ſplendid
" feaſt, which I mean to give: knowing
" you to be my heireſs, all will be
" eager to attract your attention; and
" you will be fully enabled to chuſe from
" amongſt them, with ſatisfaction to me
" and to yourſelf." Matilda ſickened at the thought; no warlike or illuſtrious chief, however fine in form or able in underſtanding, could efface from her mind the image of her beloved Conrad; and to be teazed on the one hand with diſguſtful ſolicitations, and on the other with imperious command, was torment inſupportable. Her father was an abſolute tyrant, and to remonſtrate, was uſeleſs: ſhe ſat ſilent, and revolving in her mind the propoſal for flight made by Conrad, was half inclined to accept it at all hazards, and notwithſtanding the num-

numberleſs difficulties that hedged thick around the path.

Returning to her apartment, the night was ſpent in anxious doubts and fearful forebodings, and ſhe aroſe in the morning depreſſed by fear and anxiety that ſhe could not allay. The Baron was indiſpoſed, and choſe to confine himſelf to his apartments. This was ſoon learnt by Margaret, and informing her miſtreſs, was ſent immediately to Conrad. Flying with the ſwiftneſs of lightning to the favoured youth, he was equally ſwift in following her to the preſence of her miſtreſs. "My dear Matilda," ſaid Conrad, "have you finally determined "upon the propoſal, which, dictated by "the pureſt ſentiments of love, I made "to you, of flight from the tyranny of "your father." "In truth, Conrad, I "know not what to determine; my

"father

" father talks of giving an entertainment
" to the ſurrounding chiefs, that I may
" chooſe and be choſen, and he
" ſpeaks in that calm arbitrary ſtyle, as if
" he conſidered obedience to his com-
" mand, an indiſpenſable duty." " Fly
" then, my Matilda, it is the only chance
" you have of eſcaping a hateful union."
—" Danger follows cloſe at our heels if
" we go, and unhappineſs overwhelms
" us if we ſtay—what ſhall I do?" " No
" longer heſitate, my dear girl, but de-
" cidedly depart." Matilda ſtill heſitated, preſentiments of danger croſſed her mind, and deciſion lingered upon her tongue; at length ſhe replied, " Well,
" Conrad, let us fly; we will be com-
" panions in danger and misfortune."
" My deareſt Matilda, you tranſport me
" with extacy, this very night ſhall wit-
" neſs the hurried pace of our eager
" ſteps

"ſteps from this deteſted manſion, and "the morning dawn ſhall ſee us far, very "far diſtant from its walls." A plan *of* eſcape was now agreed upon, and Margaret was made the confidant, who perſuaded Jaques to aſſiſt in the execution of the ſcheme: his aid being of great importance, as he was now again in poſſeſſion of the keys of the caſtle gates.

The night ſeemed too ſlow in arriving, and Conrad frequently paced his chamber, and watched the progreſs of the day, impatiently panting for the ſtill ſolemn ſilence of midnight. At length the long expected hour arrived, and ſilently and cautiouſly he proceeded to the apartment of Matilda; he found her diſguiſed, and anxiouſly expecting his arrival, and ſeizing her hand, led her to the caſtle gates, which had been purpoſely left open by Jaques, and from thence over the draw-

bridge

bridge to the other ſide of the moat, where they found two horſes provided for their uſe, and mounting upon them, Conrad ſeized the rein of that on which ſat his beloved Matilda, whilſt they immediately proceeded with all expedition, in the road he had before traverſed in company with Marianne.

They rode on for ſeveral miles without interruption, until the horſe on which Matilda was ſeated ſuddenly plunged, threw off his lovely rider, and himſelf falling at the ſame inſtant, broke one of his legs. Conrad was in the utmoſt degree of trepidation at the danger of Matilda, and inſtantly alighting, was rejoiced to find ſhe remained unhurt. Placing her behind him, as conveniently as poſſible, on the horſe he rode, they were compelled to leave the other to its fate, and now again purſued their jour-

ney;

ney; but the horſe upon which they were now ſeated together, unuſed to ſuch a burden, became extremely unruly, until Matilda, in the higheſt degree of alarm at the imminent hazard attendant upon her ſituation, and that of her lover, inſiſted upon alighting, and purſuing their journey on foot. Conrad was little leſs alarmed than Matilda, and more particularly at her danger, and agreed to her propoſition, though he foreſaw and lamented the probability of their being overtaken, in conſequence of the ſlow manner in which they muſt now proceed. Matilda was equally aware of the danger, but could not again mount the horſe from which ſhe had juſt deſcended.

They now journied on foot, whilſt Matilda, unuſed to ſuch exertion, was frequently obliged to reſt, until at length, towards the dawn of day, ſhe became quite

quite exhauſted by fatigue, and they took refuge in a barn that ſtood at a little diſtance from the road. Here Matilda laying her head upon the ſhoulder of her lover, ſoon ſunk into a profound ſleep. Conrad was himſelf fatigued, but fearful of harm, defeated the attacks of ſleep, and tenderly watched his beloved Matilda. As ſoon as ſhe awaked, they agreed to depart in ſearch of ſome cottage where they might procure refreſhment, which both felt the want of, and afterwards endeavour to purſue their journey by the moſt unfrequented paths. They now aroſe from the ground, where they had been ſitting, and Matilda leaning upon his arm, they were about to depart, when ſuddenly a number of retainers appeared, wearing the livery of Umfreville. All her fearful forebodings now ruſhed at once into the mind of Matilda,

tilda, and affrighted at the proſpect of the dangers which now doubtleſs awaited her Conrad, her agitation became extreme, and ſhe fainted in the arms of her lover, at the moment the retainers arrived upon the ſpot where Conrad and her now ſtood. Some of them immediately ſeized Conrad, and rudely forced the lovely object he held from his arms, whilſt he, frantic at being torn from Matilda, piteouſly intreated they would permit him to recover her from her ſwoon. Another body of retainers now drew near, and affrighted at ſeeing Matilda in a ſtate of inſenſibility, permitted Conrad to approach her, and endeavour to reſtore her to life; by the warmth of his embrace, he ſoon recovered her, and opening her eyes, ſhe turned them tenderly upon him. "Conrad," ſaid the lovely maid, "I "will ſhare your fate be it what it will."

No.

No more was allowed; Matilda was hurried away, but with all due reſpect, by a part of the retainers, whilſt the remainder completely ſurrounding Conrad, held him faſt, and precluded all poſſibility of eſcape, which was now, however, very far from his thoughts, as they took the ſame road with thoſe who conducted Matilda, following that party at a ſhort diſtance. A horſe was ready, not far from the ſpot, on which ſhe was reſpectfully mounted, by her father's retainers, who behaved towards her in the moſt obſequious manner, whilſt they rendered her their ſecure priſoner. Conrad was not treated with the ſame reſpect, but rudely dragged along by the domeſtics, who, afraid of being betrayed by each other if they ſhewed him any favour, taunted him with rough jokes, whilſt he, indignant at their treatment, but careleſs

of

of his fate, preſerved a ſullen ſilence, and did not deign to remonſtrate.

The Baron had early diſcovered the eſcape of his daughter; the horſe they had alighted from, when the alarm of Matilda at his unruly conduct would not permit her any longer to proceed upon him, had almoſt immediately trotted back to the caſtle, and loudly neighing without, rouſed the attention of the Baron, who looking from his apartment, to which he had juſt repaired from his bed-chamber, was ſurprized to ſee a horſe ſaddled and without a rider, and ſummoned Jaques before him, to enquire into the cauſe of the incident. The latter himſelf ſurprized at ſeeing the horſe returned, proteſted entire ignorance of the circumſtance; but the ſuſpicions of the Baron, ever alive, were now rouſed, and could not eaſily be allayed. He immediately

mediately inſtituted an enquiry, and ſoon found that his daughter had fled from the caſtle, under the protection of Conrad. Enraged almoſt to madneſs, at what he called the preſumption of the latter, and the former's contempt of his injunctions, he determined to ſacrifice to his fury, the life of her lover, and immediately ſent a number of his retainers different ways in purſuit of the fugitives, ordering them to ſeize Conrad if their purſuit was ſucceſsful, and without any farther command, cloſely impriſon him in one of the dungeons beneath the caſtle.

The domeſtics diſpatched in purſuit, afraid of the effects of their maſter's anger if they failed in the attainment of the object for which they were employed, traverſed the country around with ſedulous care, minutely ſearching every hovel

in

in their way, in hopes of diſcovering the concealed refuge of thoſe they were in ſearch of. Purſuing this general and indiſcriminate ſearch, they proceeded to the barn, where they thought themſelves peculiarly fortunate in diſcovering Conrad and Matilda, with whom they ſoon arrived in triumph at the caſtle.

The Baron had repaired to the apartments of his daughter, for the purpoſe of interrogating her attendants relative to the manner of her eſcape, but no fact was elicited from the enquiry, capable of ſerving as a clue to guide him to the accomplices of his daughter in her flight, and he was forced to content himſelf with ſeverely reprimanding her domeſtics for their negligence; whilſt Jaques, who had carefully faſtened again the caſtle gates, before any of the other domeſtics were ſtirring, now hinted to the Baron, in order

order to prevent any ſuſpicion from alighting on his own head, "I am inclined to "think, pleaſe your Lordſhip, that Con- "rad eſcaped with the Lady Matilda, by "means of opening the private door with "a falſe key, for I ſaw this morning, "pleaſe your Lordſhip, a boat upon the "other ſide of the moat, and I dare to "ſay they ferried themſelves over the "moat in it, from the private door." The Baron doubted not the truth of Jaques's relation, and the probability of their thus eſcaping flaſhing upon his mind, he was about to proceed to the examination of the private door and the boat, when intelligence was brought to him of his daughter's arrival.

He immediately reiterated his commands for the impriſonment of Conrad in one of the dungeons below, and waited in her apartments the arrival of his

daughter. Matilda ſoon appeared, with a calm dignity of ſorrow, that penetrated his heart in ſpite of himſelf. Reſuming, however, all his harſhneſs, he ſternly reprimanded her for her diſobedience to his ſtrict injunctions. Matilda immediately replied, "You forced me, my "Lord, to diſobedience, by the unre- "lenting ſeverity of your commands." "It is well, Matilda," retorted her father, with increaſed ſternneſs; "I will take "ſure precautions againſt a repetition of "your folly." "You may prevent me, "my Lord, from becoming united with "the object of my tendereſt affections, "but all your power will not ſerve to "force me to an union with another; "ſooner will I plunge a dagger into my "boſom." The Baron was exaſperated at what he denominated the obſtinacy of his daughter; but ſomewhat alarmed at the

the threat which deſpair might cauſe her to carry into execution, he ſoftened his manner, and replied, " I will not puniſh " Conrad for the heinous offence he has " committed, any further than by con- " finement, but you muſt not think any " more of him." " If any puniſhment " attaches to our flight, my Lord, let its " whole weight fall upon me, for I was " the prime mover of it, and ſole crimi- " nal, if crime there is in endeavouring " to eſcape from the graſp of tyranny." The Baron again frowned, and angrily quitting her apartments, charged her attendants, as they valued their lives, to keep a ſtrict watch, and prevent her leaving them without his expreſs permiſſion.

Matilda, now left to herſelf, was eager to be informed of the fate of her lover, and ſending her faithful Margaret to enquire, ſorrowfully learnt his impriſon-

ment. She immediately determined to viſit him in his confinement, and cheer the gloom of his dungeon by her preſence; and conſulting with Margaret, who adviſed with her lover Jaques, it was agreed that Matilda, to prevent a diſcovery, ſhould deſcend at midnight to his dungeon, and not ſtay longer than an hour. Matilda, delighted in the midſt of her ſorrow, at the proſpect of another interview with her beloved Conrad, and impatiently waiting for the approach of midnight, ſent him, by means of Jaques, the choiceſt viands from her own table, and rejoiced his mind with the intelligence of her intended viſit.

Conrad, in the midſt of his dungeon's gloom, had only been anxious for her ſafety, and now experienced the livelieſt ſenſations of joy at hearing of her welfare; and on being made acquainted with her

her intentions of viſiting him in his priſon, and waited her approach in a pleaſingly painful ſuſpenſe.

The hour of midnight at length arrived, and all were retired to reſt but the lovely Matilda, the anxiouſly expecting Conrad, the truſty Jaques, and the faithful Margaret. The Baron had no ſuſpicion of the fidelity of Jaques, and entruſted the cuſtody of Conrad ſolely to his care; no obſtacle therefore remained, and Matilda gently deſcending, accompanied by Margaret, followed Jaques, who carried a light before them, with trembling ſtep, to the door of the dungeon where her Conrad was impriſoned. The truſty domeſtic turned the key, whilſt the heart of Matilda violently palpitated, and immediately her hand was tenderly preſſed to the lips of the admiring Conrad, who by means of the

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" father's rage; I will be your com-
" panion in pain, and rather expire with
" you than remain behind, the victim of
" tyranny and misery." " Amiable Ma-
" tilda"—At this moment a scream, and a fearful exclamation, sounded upon their ears, and seemed to proceed from Jaques and Margaret. Matilda trembled, but immediately ran to the dungeon door, which had been left a little open, and pulling it towards her, she advanced into the passage, and had scarcely time to experience surprize at not perceiving Jaques and Margaret, when she felt her hand rudely seized, and immediately turning round, perceived with the utmost terror her father, with rage depicted in terrific colours on his countenance, standing by her side. Overpowered by the sudden shock, she remained motionless and scarcely sensible, fixed to the spot.

Her father roughly dragged her towards the ſtairs, and haſtily aſcending them, conducted her to her chamber, and without ſpeaking, puſhed her in. He had been attacked whilſt in bed, with one of thoſe fits of fearful horror to which he was frequently ſubject, and unable to ſleep, and uneaſy in all poſitions, he at length aroſe, and dreſſing himſelf, paced his chamber with a conſiderable degree of agitation. Still his perturbation experienced no calm, and taking with him a lamp, he walked into his other apartments, and found his terror rather increaſed than abated, by the ſilence that now reigned throughout the caſtle. Unable to allay the agitation of his mind, he walked from one apartment to another, hoping by continual change of place to overpower the fearful ſenſations of his breaſt. Advancing towards the ſtaircaſe,

caſe, a murmuring ſound caught his ear, which at firſt added to his terror. He trembled, and liſtening for ſome time, found it ſtill continued. It now darted into his ſuſpicious mind, that his daughter might find means to procure the eſcape of Conrad, and again make him the companion of her flight. He reflected upon this, until the probability of the event almoſt amounted to certainty in his mind, and he already fancied he heard them commencing their departure from the caſtle. Agitated by theſe ſuppoſitions, he at length determined to deſcend the ſtaircaſe, and witneſs himſelf their truth or falſehood. Proceeding to the lower part of the caſtle, all was ſtill; the ſolemn ſilence which environed him, again increaſed the terror that before preyed upon his mind, and he half repented the ſtep he had taken. Whilſt remaining in

ſuſpenſe, the ſame murmuring ſound met his ear, and ſtill ſuſpicious of ſome plot in agitation, he determined to commence an examination of the lower parts of the caſtle. Arriving at length in the paſſage leading to the dungeon door, a glimpſe of light appeared through the crevice made by the door not being quite ſhut. Surprized and alarmed at the circumſtance, he immediately repaired to the ſpot, and opening the door, he ſoftly deſcended a few ſteps, and plainly perceived Jaques and Margaret in cloſe converſation in the paſſage. Intent upon each other, and not dreaming of being diſturbed, they had not perceived his approach; but now his ſhadow croſſing their eyes, they fearfully turned round, and perceiving the Baron, uttered the exclamation and the ſcream which had alarmed Matilda in the dungeon of Conrad,

rad, and at the ſame time inſtinctively ran the contrary way, towards the other end of the paſſage.

The Baron having led, or rather forcibly dragged, his daughter to her chamber, and thruſt her in, became again the victim of indiſcriminate ſuſpicion, and knowing not whom to truſt, determined to ſit up himſelf in the apartment adjoining to her chamber, the remainder of the night, and thus effectually bar the acceſs of every one. Matilda, though ſhe little expected the appearance of her father at ſuch an hour, and in ſuch a place, yet had now become ſo inured to diſappointment and misfortune, that ſhe rather looked down with calmneſs upon that ſhe had now experienced, than ſuffered her ſorrow to be increaſed by it. She ſet at defiance the power of her father, and determined to be united with her lover in

the ſilken chains of wedlock, or within the icy bounds of the tomb.

Conrad, on hearing the noiſe in the paſſage, was ſomewhat alarmed, but almoſt immediately concluded it was only the effect of ſome ſudden terror, occaſioned by the fears of the place. Matilda, however, running out of the dungeon, he determined to follow her, to enquire into its cauſe, but unfortunately the door, which had remained a little open whilſt ſhe was in the dungeon, was now ſhut by Matilda in her hurry, and there being no means of opening it within, he found himſelf prevented from quitting his priſon, and compelled to wait her return. Aſtoniſhed at her ſtay, and hearing ſome one aſcending the ſteps, he began to fear the Baron had diſcovered her viſit, and remained a prey to the moſt anxious ſuſpenſe.

Jaques

Jaques and Margaret, in the mean time, had taken refuge in the ſhort paſſage at the end, and were now trembling with fear and apprehenſion, expecting every moment to be ſeized, and themſelves impriſoned in one of the dungeons. At length, ſilence prevailing for a conſiderable time, they ventured to peep from their concealment, and ſeeing no one in the great paſſage, took courage, and proceeded ſlowly and cautiouſly along it. Conrad hearing the ſound of the footſteps, knocked vehemently at the door of his dungeon, anxious to enquire into the cauſe of Matilda's ſudden departure. Starting at the ſound, Jaques at length ventured to open the door, and then informed Conrad of the event that had happened. Margaret and him now repaired to their apartments, in ſorrow and trepidation, afraid of the conſequences

quences that would result on the morrow, from this night's conduct, whilſt Conrad remained in his dungeon, grieved at the unfortunate event, but ſtill enjoying the pureſt delight in the remembrance that he was the dear and only object of Matilda's affections.

Matilda was extremely ſurprized, on leaving her chamber in the morning, to find her father in the adjoining apartment. "See," ſaid he, "undutiful girl, "how I am obliged to break my reſt, to "prevent your nocturnal wanderings." "It is for your own pleaſure, my Lord, "you do that." A ſcheme had juſt darted into the mind of the Baron, and abruptly leaving her without noticing her reply, he repaired to an adjoining room, and ſent for Jaques.

Jaques, on receiving the commands of his maſter, began to tremble, and was half

half inclined to fly from the caſtle, but recollecting the inutility of ſuch an attempt, he at length appeared in the preſence of the Baron, but under evident trepidation. The harſhneſs of ſeverity was, however, abſent from his countenance, and this Jaques conſidering as a favourable omen, he became ſomewhat more compoſed. "Jaques," ſaid the Baron, "I am well acquainted with your "being an accomplice in my daughter's "midnight and forbidden wanderings to "the dungeon of Conrad; but upon one "condition you ſhall not only receive "pardon, but be endowed with inde-"pendence." Pardon and independence were delightful ſounds to the ears of Jaques, and he greedily liſtened. "That "is" continued the Baron, "that you "perſuade Conrad to marry ſome female, "either in the houſehold or its neigh-"bourhood,

" bourhood, whom he muſt immediately " fix upon; and I authorize you to offer " him, in my name, as a conſideration " for ſuch marriage, a portion of land " ſufficient to enſure him in its produce, " not only independence, but a moderate " affluence; let the marriage take place " directly, and the eſtate ſhall be imme- " diately conveyed to him; I pledge my " honour for the performance of the " promiſe." The high hopes of Jaques were now much fallen in the ſcale of certainty; to perſuade Conrad to quit all thoughts of Matilda, and marry another, he juſtly thought an impoſſibility, however tempting or ſplendid the offered bribe; the attempt, however, muſt be made, and he replied, " I will try, my " Lord, to perſuade him according to " your Lordſhip's wiſhes;" and withdrawing, immediately repaired to the dungeon

dungeon where Conrad was confined. No ſooner had he opened his purpoſe, than Conrad ſternly replied, "No, "Jaques; go tell your maſter, that not "all his wealth and all his power united, "ſhall bribe me to yield up Matilda, and "become the huſband of another;" and reſolutely refuſed to hear a repetition of the propoſal. Jaques was compelled to retire without effecting the object of his miſſion, and repairing to his own apartment, did not dare to encounter the angry frown of his maſter, who, irritated at his failure, he now ſuppoſed would ſeverely puniſh him, for his concern in the conſpiracy, by means of which Matilda was led to the dungeon of her lover.

The Baron in the mean time, truſting to the ſucceſs of his ſcheme, repaired to the apartment where his daughter was

now

now ſeated, and with ſome degree of exultation, ſaid to her, "Well, Matilda, "you muſt look out for another lover "now, Conrad has wiſely accepted a pro-"poſal I made to him, and is about to "be married to a female in the houſe-"hold." Not many hours had elapſed ſince they had interchanged the tendereſt ſentiments of affection, and delighted perceived in each other the ſame degree of enraptured love. That Conrad ſhould now become an apoſtate to thoſe feelings that influenced his heart, and be united to another, was an improbability too glaring to be believed—it was impoſſible; and Matilda conſidering it as a barefaced and ill-concealed trick of her father, to extinguiſh her affection for Conrad, diſdained an anſwer. The Baron was enraged at the ſilent contempt with which ſhe treated his aſſertion, and impatiently waited

waited for the return of Jaques, who was at this period in his apartment, not daring to repair to the preſence of his maſter, and revolving in his mind the means of eſcape.

Concluding from the long ſtay of Jaques, that his perſuaſive efforts had been ſucceſsful, the Baron exultingly repeated his aſſertion. Matilda ſtill remained a ſilent unbeliever; and in a rage he diſpatched a domeſtic to the chamber of Jaques, to order him into his preſence, if he was thither returned. Jaques, on hearing the commands of the Baron, became ſtill more affrighted, but eſcape was now impoſſible; to proceed to the preſence of his maſter, was the only remaining alternative, and ſtill hoping to be ſafe from the effects of his fury, he at length reluctantly obeyed the order he had received. Arriving in the apartment where

where his maſter and Matilda were ſeated, the Baron immediately and confidently ſaid; "Well, Jaques, when is the "marriage to be ſolemnized?" Jaques fixed his eyes upon the ground, and ſaid not a word. The Baron angrily repeated his queſtion, and Jaques at length replied, with tremulous voice, "I don't "know, pleaſe your Lordſhip." "Don't "know," vehemently retorted the Baron, "does he then refuſe to accept my pro-"poſal?" "Yes, pleaſe your Lordſhip, "he does." "Racks and tortures then "ſhall be his portion," replied the Baron, in a paroxyſm of rage, "and excru-"ciating torments ſhall terminate his "exiſtence." Matilda heard and trembled. "Reflect a little, my Lord," ſaid ſhe, "before you ſend forth the fiat for "the deſtruction of Conrad; by that act "you ſeal the fate of your daughter; I

"will

" will not ſurvive him." But the fury of the Baron now knew no bounds; with a terrific ſternneſs he replied, " Baſe girl, " you ſhall only be united to Conrad in " the tomb; the inſtruments of torture " ſhall be made ready, and you ſhall be " the witneſs of his torments; you ſhall " ſee him expire in writhing agonies, and " know at the ſame time that you are " the cauſe of his ſufferings." Matilda turned pale, but ſcorning to diſplay herſelf under the influence of fear before the cruel and inexorable tyrant, who now lacerated her feelings, ſhe haughtily replied, " Yes, my Lord, I will be the " witneſs of thoſe tortures that your cruel " tyranny inflicts upon my Conrad, and " I will encourage him to bear them " with fortitude and reſignation." Jaques ſtill ſtood trembling in the preſence of the Baron, who in the hurry of his rage had

had forgotten him; but now ſummoning a number of domeſtics, he ordered them to make priſoners of Jaques and Margaret, and guard them in the hall, until he deſcended thither. Seizing the hand of Matilda, he now dragged her after him down the ſtairs to the hall, and taking an elevated ſeat, he placed and forcibly held her at his ſide.

Ordering the inſtruments of torture to be brought before him, and turning to Matilda with the ſneer of delighted cruelty, he aſked her, "Do you think, "Matilda, theſe will fit your Conrad?" Matilda diſdained him an anſwer, and ſat in fearful ſuſpenſe awaiting the appearance of Conrad, whom the Baron now commanded to be dragged into his preſence, whilſt Margaret was weeping and convulſively ſobbing, and Jaques tremblingly imploring pardon and compaſſion.

ſion. The Baron deigned not to notice them, but ſat with impatient rage, expecting the appearance of his deſtined victim.

The domeſtics diſpatched for Conrad, found him ſitting in his dungeon, immerſed in a deep reverie, and ſcarcely conſcious of their entrance. As ſoon as he was made acquainted with their errand, he did not heſitate to accompany them. Aware of the Baron's cruel and inexorable temper, he proceeded to his preſence, fully expecting to experience all the anguiſh of torture, and with a firmneſs of mind that bid defiance to bodily pain. The door of the hall of torture was opened, and Conrad was led unreluctant in. The Baron ſtarted at the ſight of him, and haſtily deſcending from his elevation ſtood aghaſt; his eyeballs wildly glaring upon the object whom he

he had ſo impatiently expected. An univerſal tremor ſeized him, the dewy drops crouded thick upon his forehead, and convulſively agitated, it was only the ſpeedy aſſiſtance of his aſtoniſhed domeſtics, that prevented him from falling headlong upon the floor. Conrad, Jaques, and Margaret, were immediately deſerted by thoſe who guarded them, all crouding around their maſter, and viewing him with aſtoniſhed gaze, ſilently wondered at the reaſon of his agitation, whilſt Conrad remained in his place, amazed at what he ſaw, and loſt in conjecture concerning its cauſe, and Matilda looked alternately at him and the Baron with enquiring eye, and eagerly wiſhed to become acquainted with the circumſtances that had given riſe to the ſtrange event.

With

With difficulty the domeſtics who ſurrounded him prevented their maſter from fainting, and ſupporting him around he remained nearly inſenſible, and fearfully agitated with convulſive tremor. At length, ſomewhat recovering, he again turned his eyes upon Conrad, and nearly relapſing into his former ſtate, he called out with tremulous and interrupted voice, "Take, O take away that dreadful ſpectre!" His domeſtics amazed at his words concluded he had been ſeized with a ſudden fit of inſanity, and trembled whilſt they fearfully gazed upon his agitated countenance. Conrad ſtill remained immerſed in wonder, and the Baron again looking at him, ſtill trembling with agitation, and with horror impreſſed upon his countenance, called out with convulſive voice, "Who "art thou?" Conrad immediately re-

plied, "I am Conrad, the ſon of Rollo." The Baron again became fearfully agitated, and contemplating him with eyes of terror was about to ſay more, when a domeſtic entered, breathleſs and covered with ſweat, and in accents of fear cried out "My Lord, the Baron de Monta-"cute is marching, with all expedition, "at the head of his retainers, to ſur-"priſe your caſtle, and murder your "Lordſhip, and the houſehold." New terrors now agitated the Baron, for notwithſtanding he continued his criminal career, he began to feel the infirmities of age, and was incapable of that active exertion neceſſary to repel the ſudden attack of a courageous foe; even now his enemy was haſtening towards his manſion, and before he could collect his ſtrength, would overwhelm him by the force of numbers. Terror had overpowered his mind,

mind, and he hesitated when not a moment was to be lost. Conrad perceived his perplexity, and felt the love of warlike atchievement beat high in his breast, and trembling for the fate of Matilda, in the event of a successful warlike attack upon the mansion of Umfreville, immediately addressed the Baron, "My "Lord," said he, "you are aged and "infirm, and unable to bear the fatigues "of war, let me lead your retainers to "the field, and repel the daring invader." The Baron again looked at him with terror, though mingled with some degree of pleasure, and rejoicing at his offer, not knowing whom to entrust with the command, replied to his proposal, "Go, summon the retainers to my stand-"ard, and you shall command them "under me." Conrad scarcely waited for the conclusion of the Baron's reply,

but rapidly fled, and ſummoning all the retainers around, ſoon collected a numerous and courageous band, who, ſtruck with the martial appearance of Conrad, now arrayed in warlike habiliments, and mounted on a well proportioned horſe, rejoiced in their commander, and eagerly panted to be led by him to the combat. The Baron ſoon quitted the caſtle, bringing with him the retainers of his houſehold, and with unfeigned pleaſure ſaw Conrad join him, with the numerous band he had ſo expeditiouſly collected, but ſtill averted his face, and could not look on the warlike youth, without experiencing a return of terror and agitation.

The ſtrong and courageous band now aſſembled, immediately marched, commanded by the Baron, but all looking upon Conrad as their chief; and had pro-

proceeded but a ſhort diſtance before the Baron de Montacute's army of retainers appeared full in view, led on by himſelf. The indignity he had ſuffered when compelled to yield up Marianne to the ready prepared force of Arthur, unable himſelf to make timely preparations for defence, had rankled in his breaſt, and he determined upon revenge. The intelligence he received of Arthur's death, ſtrengthened and fixed his determination, and with the utmoſt ſecrecy, he made preparations, reſolving to retort the attack in the ſame manner it had been made, and coming upon the Baron de Umfreville, when unprepared and ignorant of the enterpriſe, ſurpriſe and plunder his caſtle, ſacrifice him to his reſentment, and forcibly recover Marianne, the remembrance of whoſe faſcinating charms, ſtill agitated his breaſt with all the tumult

of deſire. One of his domeſtics had an intrigue with the wife of a retainer upon the eſtate of the Baron de Umfreville, and knowing of the intended expedition, revealed it to her, and promiſed her his protection. The wife, notwithſtanding this promiſe, became alarmed at the proſpect of the hoſtile inroad, and gave information of it to her huſband, who loſt no time, but immediately ran to his maſter to impart to him the intelligence.

Montacute, careleſsly advancing, in the full confidence of meeting with no reſiſtance, could ſcarcely believe the evidence of his ſight, when he perceived before him in hoſtile array, the retainers of his adverſary, attired in their warlike habiliments, and arranged in full force, ready for the expected combat. He now conſidered himſelf betrayed, and would gladly have retired from the field, but

retreat

retreat became impoſſible without defeat and diſhonour, and his only alternative was boldly to advance, and courageouſly meet the attack, which inſtead of commencing himſelf, he had now every reaſon to expect from his adverſary. The hoſtile bands drew cloſer to each other, and Montacute contemplating Conrad, with conſiderable attention, recollected the ignominious defeat he had formerly experienced, by means of his courage and preſence of mind, and viewed his activity in marſhalling the force of his adverſary, and the boldneſs with which he led them on, with much fearful anxiety. He had hoped only to meet the Baron de Umfreville, who, old and infirm, was incapable of meeting his attack with much vigour and reſolution, and now the ſight of the young ſtranger, at the head of a courageous band, made him half repent

the ſtep he had taken, and wiſh himſelf in ſafety at his own manſion.

The Baron de Umfreville led on his retainers to the combat, whilſt Conrad animated them to the fight, and ruſhing into the foremoſt rank, the party of Montacute was attacked with the utmoſt fury. The latter defended themſelves with bravery, but not with the courage that animated their aſſailants; they had not expected to meet reſiſtance, and now being themſelves attacked, became comparatively feeble and diſpirited. Montacute ſaw the weak energy of his followers, and ruſhing into the thickeſt of the battle, endeavoured to encourage them by his courageous example; his efforts, in ſome degree, ſucceeded, and the battle raged with ten-fold fury. Conrad was every where inſpiriting the retainers of Umfreville, and himſelf performing

forming prodigies of valor. The animated attack which was now made by the retainers of Montacute, animated by the example of their lord, had ſomewhat damped the ardour of their adverſaries, and the Baron de Umfreville perceiving this, furiouſly advanced againſt the aſſailing chief, determined to combat in perſon the aſpiring warrior. Montacute heſitated not to meet the attack, and viewing his adverſary as inferior to himſelf, in ſtrength and ſkill, conſidered it as a fortunate circumſtance, and likely to decide, in his favour, the event of the conteſt. Their ſwords repeatedly claſhed, and for a time deciſion ſeemed to be equally balanced: the retainers now ceaſed their combat, and attended ſolely to their oppoſed chiefs; at length, Montacute, parrying a thruſt aimed by his adverſary, at the ſame inſtant plunged

his ſword into the body of the latter. The Baron de Umfreville immediately fell from his horſe, and was ſuppoſed by his retainers to be dead; diſpirited, they were about to fly, even without a renewal of attack from their adverſaries, but Conrad immediately advanced, and with furious onſet, aſſailed the victorious Montacute, when juſt upon the point of leading on his followers againſt the half diſcomfited legions of Umfreville. Montacute liked not the attack, but was compelled to defend himſelf againſt the furious aſſault of his adverſary, whilſt he endeavoured to retire, and once more truſt his hopes of victory to the courage of his retainers. But Conrad, panting for victory, and conſidering Matilda as its prize, ruſhed on with redoubled ardour and ten-fold fury, and plunging his ſword to the heart of his adverſary, laid

laid him low in the duſt, a breathleſs corpſe at his feet. The retainers of Montacute ſhrunk with terror at the fall of their leader and the impetuous courage of Conrad, and ſcarcely waiting for the onſet of their antagoniſts, confuſedly fled, and diſperſing themſelves different ways, each endeavoured to reach a place of ſafety, without attending to his companions. The victorious Conrad diſdained to purſue the ſcattered fugitives, and leaving a party ſufficiently ſtrong to prevent the hoſtile retainers from committing depredations in their flight, he ſlowly marched homewards with the reſt, ſome of them bearing upon a litter they had procured, the Baron de Umfreville, who was not dead, but dangerouſly wounded.

On their arrival at the caſtle, the Baron was immediately put to bed, and

a ſurgeon being procured, examined the wound, and pronounced it to be not immediately mortal, but in great danger of becoming ſo. Matilda, in the mean time, had been anxiouſly watching for the return of her father's retainers, and perceiving at a diſtance, a litter borne upon the ſhoulders of ſeveral of them, influenced by her fears, ſhe imagined it to be her beloved Conrad, and became a prey to the moſt lively grief. Soon, however, ſhe perceived the noble and commanding figure of her lover, mounted upon his horſe, at the head of the little army, and without much emotion, concluded the wounded perſonage to be her father. With heartfelt joy ſhe heard her Conrad hailed as the victor, and greeted him with expreſſions of love and admiration; Conrad ſeized her hand, and tenderly

tenderly preſſed it to his lips, and immediately attended the wounded Baron to his chamber, whither Matilda quickly followed.

The Baron had now become a pitiable object; the pain ariſing from his wound, and the faintneſs he experienced from the profuſe loſs of blood, were the leaſt of his torments. Terror and remorſe had taken full poſſeſſion of his mind, and now depicted upon his countenance all the anguiſh of fearful horror. Turning his eyes upon Conrad, of whoſe preſence he had not hitherto been conſcious, a violent agony agitated his frame, and Conrad perceiving himſelf to be the cauſe of it, immediately withdrew, whilſt Matilda remained with her father at his expreſs intreaty.

Conrad was retiring to his own apartment muſing on the ſtrange events that had

had lately occurred, when he was met by Jaques, who had not been engaged in the late combat, but remained with a few more of the houſhold to guard the caſtle. "Conrad," ſaid Jaques, "I'm heartily "glad I've met with you. Rufus is dan-"gerouſly ill up ſtairs, and wiſhes to ſay "ſomething to you of importance before "he dies." Conrad now remembered the agitation of Rufus when he firſt repaired to his apartment, and influenced by anxious curioſity, with eager ſtep immediately aſcended thither again. On his entering the chamber, the agitation of Rufus was renewed; but, recovering himſelf a little, he deſired a domeſtic who was attending upon him to withdraw, and immediately requeſting Conrad to advance towards his bed ſide, he looked at him for ſome time with much fearful attention and conſiderable emotion, and

at

at length aſked him the name of his father. "His name was Rollo," replied Conrad. The name ſeemed to ſtrike terror into the mind of Rufus; he ſighed deeply, and at length ſaid, "It muſt be "him!" and again pauſing, continued, "Did you ever hear him ſpeak of a ſeal "which was given to him in a myſterious "manner?" "A ſeal!" replied Conrad, with the utmoſt eagerneſs, "I have it "about me;" and diſplaying the ſeal given to him by his father on his death bed, related to Rufus all that his father had then imparted to him. Rufus heard him with attention, and frequently, during the relation, ſeemed much agitated. When Conrad had concluded, he pauſed a while, and ſeemed loth to begin, but at length ſaid, "I was much ſurpriſed and agitated "by the ſight of you when you aſcended "to my chamber, and for reaſons which

"I will

" I will now relate to you, as I am con-
" vinced you are deeply intereſted in the
" ſecret that has hitherto remained faſt
" locked in my breaſt, and which a con-
" ſciouſneſs of approaching diſſolution
" now induces me to reveal to you. You
" have no doubt heard the ſtory concern-
" ing the marriage of the Baron's ſiſter,
" the Lady Roſalind, againſt the conſent
" of her father, of the ſubſequent recon-
" ciliation which apparently took place
" between her and her brother, of her
" repairing to the Caſtle with her huſband
" and ſon, and ſudden diſappearance?"
" I have," replied Conrad, " frequently,
" and univerſal ſuſpicion points at the
" Baron as her murderer, though it dare
" not ſpeak out." " Suſpicion ſpeaks
" too true," ſaid Rufus, with a heavy
ſigh, " of him, and too ſurely points me
" out as his criminal agent. The Baron

" invited

" invited his ſiſter and her huſband to the
" caſtle, with the utmoſt apparent cor-
" diality, and aſſigning them magnificent
" apartments in the Weſtern Tower,
" treated them with the greateſt kindneſs,
" and behaved to them with affability
" and politeneſs; but the defiance that
" the Lady Roſalind had indignantly
" hurled at him when threatening her
" with his diſpleaſure, and her con-
" temptuous treatment of him had deeply
" wounded his pride, and he determined
" upon revenging himſelf by the deſtruc-
" tion of her as well as her huſband and
" child. It was this fell purpoſe con-
" tinually rankling in his mind that dic-
" tated all the diſplay of kindneſs and
" affection which now marked his con-
" duct towards his ſiſter and her huſband.
" I was at that period the ſuperintendant
" of his houſhold, and alſo his confidant;

" and

" and, conſtantly intent upon the ven-
" geance he meditated, he at length
" imparted to me the purpoſe of his
" mind, and wiſhed to bribe me to be-
" come his aſſiſtant. Recoiling with hor-
" ror at the propoſal, I reſolutely refuſed
" compliance; he threatened me with
" his diſpleaſure, and even with inſtant
" death; until, at length, wrought upon
" by alternate promiſes and threats, to
" my ſhame be it told, in an evil hour
" I conſented to become his accomplice
" in the wanton and deliberate murder
" he meditated to commit. An evil
" hour indeed it was for me! It deſtroyed
" my peace of mind, and has rendered
" me a miſerable wretched being ever
" ſince. A plan was agreed upon for
" the aſſaſſination of the Lady Roſalind,
" Sir Fitzhugh her huſband, and their
" infant ſon. In purſuance of this a re-

" port

d by our joint contrivance
acy being on foot amongſt
miners upon the Baron's eſtate,
nd an attack menaced by a neigh-
" bouring chief, and under pretence of
" aſſiſting their maſter in various capa-
" cities, the few domeſtics who had been
" allotted to the Lady Roſalind and Sir
" Fitzhugh were withdrawn, except one
" ancient female; whilſt, to diſſipate all
" ſuſpicion, the Baron conſtantly viſited
" them, and behaved to them with even
" a ſtill greater degree of polite affection.
" The evening before the night when
" the dreadful purpoſe of unprincipled
" vengeance was agreed to be executed,
" the Baron ſpent with them at their
" apartments, and by frequent convivial
" bumpers intoxicated Sir Fitzhugh,
" whilſt himſelf remained tolerably ſober;
" and then aſſiſting him to bed, quitted his
" ſiſter

" ſiſter with the utmoſt apparent cordi-
" ality and good will; and as he left
" the Tower, carefully and ſecretly lock-
" ed the door. In the mean time, I had
" brought away the only attendant who
" remained in the Tower, under pre-
" tence of employing her for ſome pur-
" poſe that required her ſervices in ano-
" ther part of the caſtle, and thus they
" were left alone in the apartments of the
" Weſt Tower. It was at midnight—
" alas! the recollection of that fatal hour
" even now, fills me with terror." A trembling ſeized him, and for ſome time he was unable to proceed; at length, again recovering himſelf, he continued, " the ſecret rends my heart in utterance, " but I owe the diſcloſure of it as a duty " before death impoſes upon my tongue " eternal ſilence. It was at midnight, after " that evening, when all were claſped in

" the

" the arms of ſleep, and ſilence pervaded
" the caſtle and its environs, that the
" Baron and myſelf, each taking with
" him a feeble light juſt ſufficient to
" point out the way, proceeded from his
" Lordſhip's apartments ſlowly along to
" the door that led to the Weſt Tower.
" The Baron gave me the key to open
" it, but a trembling ſeized me, every
" limb ſhook, and I could not direct the
" key into the lock. Immediately ſeiz-
" ing it himſelf, and ſnatching it out of
" my hand, he opened the door, though
" evidently under much trepidation, and
" we entered upon the ſtairs; turning
" from theſe into a dark paſſage, we at
" length arrived at the ſtaircaſe leading
" to the upper apartments, and aſcending
" with the utmoſt caution, proceeded to
" the room where the Lady Roſalind and
" her huſband ſlept. The Baron opened
" the

" the door, and immediately ſeized his
" dagger, I likewiſe took hold of mine,
" but could ſcarcely wield it by reaſon
" of the tremor that agitated my frame.
" Sir Fitzhugh and the Lady Roſalind
" were in a ſound ſleep, and their little
" infant lying between them, ſmiling as
" it lay aſleep, conſcious of no danger.
" The Baron ſent me round to that ſide
" of the bed where his ſiſter was ſleeping,
" and himſelf repaired to Sir Fitzhugh,
" and ſhortly after plunged a dagger into
" his heart which inſtantly killed him.
" I, ſcarcely knowing what I did, plung-
" ed mine into the boſom of the Lady
" Roſalind; but from the trepidation I
" was in, the wound did not inſtantly
" cauſe her death, and ſhe groaned
" deeply. Her groans terrified the
" Baron, who, in extreme agitation,
" dropped his dagger, and haſtily ran out

" of

" of the apartment. It now ſtruck me,
" I might make ſome atonement for the
" heinous crime I had committed, by
" taking care of the child; and, conceal-
" ing it in the bed clothes, I determined
" to preſerve his life. The groans of
" the Lady Roſalind had now ceaſed,
" and ſhe had become a lifeleſs corpſe.
" The Baron again entered the room
" pale and trembling, and anxious to
" quit the tower. Intent upon my ſcheme,
" I told him, if he would give me the
" key I would come again to the Tower
" when a little recovered from the tre-
" mor that overwhelmed me, and diſ-
" poſe of the bodies. To this he gladly
" conſented, and, impatient to leave the
" place, hurried away, whilſt I trem-
" blingly followed, haſtily taking up
" my dagger which I had placed upon
" the bed. Returning through the dark

" paſſage

" paſſage, we fancied we heard a foot-
" ſtep behind us, and mutually alarmed,
" turned round affrighted at the imagi-
" nary ſound. Trembling, I dropped
" the dagger which I had hitherto held
" in my hand, and we haſtened with the
" utmoſt horror out of the Tower.
" Shortly afterwards, when the Baron
" had retired to his chamber, I returned
" to the Tower, and hurrying with the ut-
" moſt trepidation to the apartment which
" had been the ſcene of the fatal tragedy,
" I ſeized the infant who was ſtill aſleep,
" and carried him to my own chamber.
" The next day I adviſed with the Ba-
" ron concerning the beſt means of con-
" cealing the bodies, and he gave me
" the key of a cloſet behind the tapeſtry
" in the ſame room where the murder
" had been committed, and directed me
" to conceal them there, but declined
" returning

" returning himſelf to the Tower. I
" rejoiced at his determination, though
" the thought of proceeding thither by
" myſelf chilled me with horror, be-
" cauſe, by that means, the preſerva-
" tion of the child would be effectually
" hid. At length, aſſuming ſome de-
" gree of courage, I again on the next
" night repaired to the Tower, and tak-
" ing down the tapeſtry, conveyed the
" bodies into the cloſet, and carefully
" replacing what I had removed, hur-
" ried out of the room. I fancied I ſaw
" the figures of the Lady Roſalind and
" Sir Fitzhugh before me, and ſtarted
" back with the greateſt terror; then I
" imagined they were purſuing me, and
" I ran with the utmoſt precipitation,
" whilſt flames ſeemed to environ me,
" out of the Tower, and locking the
" door, repaired to my apartment; and

" in contemplating the ſmiling innocence
" of the child I had preſerved, forgot
" in ſome meaſure the horrors I had ſo
" lately experienced. In the morning,
" I carried the key to the Baron, and a
" ſtory was circulated of the Lady Ro-
" ſalind and Sir Fitzhugh having fled
" with their infant ſon from the caſtle;
" no traces of their flight could be diſ-
" covered, and the tale was generally
" diſcredited, but no one dared to inſti-
" tute an enquiry relative to their diſap-
" pearance, afraid of the power and
" vengeful ſpirit of the Baron, and the
" murders have remained a ſecret until
" this day. The child, whom I con-
" veyed to my apartment, I kept con-
" cealed there for a few days, but fearing
" a diſcovery, I hired a cottage at ſome
" diſtance, under pretence of ſleeping
" there for the benefit of my health, and

" ſecretly

" ſecretly conveyed thither the infant ſon
" of Lady Roſalind. In that cottage I
" reared him, and devoted what time I
" could ſpare to his education. I im-
" parted to him all the knowledge I poſ-
" ſeſſed or could glean for the purpoſe,
" and he remained there until he was
" ſixteen years of age. The ſtriking re-
" ſemblance between him and his father
" alarmed me with the fear of his being
" diſcovered by the Baron, and of the
" vengeance of the latter; and after many
" ſtruggles, I determined to convey him
" to a conſiderable diſtance, and leave
" him to his fate. Alledging impaired
" health as the pretext, I obtained the
" Baron's permiſſion for an excurſion.
" I requeſted the youth I had educated
" to accompany me, and led him through
" ſeveral winding roads to a great diſtance
" that he might not eaſily retrace his

" ſteps, and at length abruptly left him,
" and haſtily returned by the ſhorteſt
" road to the caſtle. That youth was
" Rollo, your father, and you are the
" grandſon of the Lady Roſalind, and
" nephew to the Baron de Umfreville.
" The ſtriking reſemblance you bear to
" your grandmother, ſurpriſed and alarm-
" ed me when you firſt aſcended to my
" chamber. I had never before ſeen
" you, nor did I know of ſuch a perſon-
" age being in the caſtle, and your ſud-
" den appearance recalled all thoſe ſenſa-
" tions of horror which I felt at the
" murder of the Lady Roſalind, and
" have often ſince experienced with re-
" newed force. It was even ſome time
" before I could perſuade myſelf that it
" was not her ſpectre which I had ſeen,
" and I talked ſo incoherently that the
" domeſtic who attended me imagined

" my

" my mind was deranged. But at
" length, learning who it was I had ſeen,
" I doubted not you was the ſon of Rol-
" lo, and I determined to ſend for you,
" that I might make known to you the
" ſecret of your deſcent. My mind is
" now conſiderably eaſed. Remorſe de-
" prived me of happineſs; and at length,
" unable to bear ſociety, I confined my-
" ſelf a recluſe to my chamber, and
" have dragged on a miſerable exiſtence
" for ſeveral years paſt. The ſeal which
" I left with your father when I deſerted
" him belonged to Sir Fitzhugh; and
" finding it in the chamber where him
" and Lady Roſalind were ſo cruelly
" murdered, I carefully kept it, and
" left it in the poſſeſſion of Rollo, ſup-
" poſing it might at ſome future period
" be the means of diſcovering his deſcent,
" and of ſervice to him. The device,

" as you perceive, is an infant joining " the hands of two warlike chiefs. Sir " Fitzhugh ſuppoſing, as the Baron " took particular notice of his child, " that Rollo was the cauſe of the recon- " ciliation between him and the Baron, " cauſed this device to be engraven upon " two ſeals, and preſenting one to the " Baron, preſerved the other in his own " poſſeſſion, which is the ſame your " father gave to you upon his death bed." Rufus now pauſed, and Conrad who had heard him patiently to the end, received a ſatisfactory elucidation of the myſterious circumſtances attendant upon his deſcent, but ſtill wiſhed for an explanation of the incident that occurred at the ruined caſtle curioſity had induced him to viſit relative to the portrait he found there. Producing it before Rufus, and mentioning the circumſtances of its diſcovery, he immediately

immediately recognized it, and ſaid, "This is the portrait of the Lady Roſa-"lind, your grandmother, which I found "in the apartment where ſhe was mur-"dered, and I intended to have left it in "the poſſeſſion of your father, along with "the ſeal, but forgot to do it; and in "returning home I ſtopped at the caſtle "you allude to, but did not diſcover "that I had loſt it until ſome time after-"wards, it is highly probable therefore, "I unknowingly dropped it there." Conrad now related to the old man the appearance to his imagination, of the female figure in the Weſt Tower, and the diſcovery he had in conſequence made, and produced the daggers he had found. Rufus heard him with terror and aſtoniſhment; and fearfully looking at the daggers, a delirium overpowered his ſenſes, and he called out with a voice of deſpair,

" See, they are calling out for judgment " againſt me! O, Lady Roſalind, for " God's ſake forbear, and let the pre- " ſervation of your ſon be an atonement " for the horrid deed!" Conrad became alarmed, and called in the domeſtic whom Rufus had ſent out of the room. At length he became more calm, and ſending for Jaques, deſired him to ſummon to his apartment the domeſtics of the houſehold. The domeſtics ſoon flocked in anxiouſly curious to know what he wiſhed to ſay, and Rufus immediately addreſſed them with all the ſtrength of voice he was maſter of; and having ſhortly related the particulars of the murder of the Lady Roſalind and Sir Fitzhugh, he concluded with peculiar emphaſis, " That I may make all the atonement " in my power for the horrid deed I " have committed, I publickly declare,

" that

" that to my certain knowledge Conrad, " who now ſtands by my bed ſide, is the " grandſon of the Lady Roſalind, and " the next heir to the Baron, failing the " Lady Matilda." His ſtrength now began to fail him, and feeling himſelf extremely ill, he earneſtly deſired a prieſt might be ſent for, to adminiſter to him the conſolations of religion. This requeſt was inſtantly complied with, and the domeſtics left the room, accompanied by Conrad, with emotions of wonder and amazement.

He had ſcarcely retired to his apartment when Rufus again ſent for him, and upon aſcending thither again found him ſomewhat better; he now deſired to have pen, ink, and paper brought to him. " I have juſt been informed," ſaid he, " of the dangerous ſtate in which the " Baron is lying, and being unable to

" repair perſonally to his preſence, I will " inform him by letter of the trick I " made uſe of to conceal the preſerva- " vation of his ſiſter's ſon, and of the " relationſhip you bear towards him; " it is wrote with an expiring hand, and " I hope will induce him to make ſome " atonement to you for the wanton bar- " barity he exerciſed towards his ſiſter." Saying this, he wrote the promiſed note, and requeſted the prieſt who had now arrived at his chamber to become the bearer of it to the Baron. With this requeſt he immediately complied, and accompanied by Conrad, repaired to the door of the apartment in which the Baron lay. Knocking for admiſſion, Matilda, who was ſtill with her father, opened it, and the prieſt was immediately admitted, whilſt Conrad remained without, unwilling

ing to agitate the Baron by his re-appearance until ſent for to his preſence.

The prieſt advanced to the bed ſide, and the Baron ſtarting at the ſight of him, concluded he had but a ſhort time to live, and the former was come to perform the laſt offices of religion. Terror again overwhelmed him, and writhing in the agonies of remorſe he became dreadfully agitated. The prieſt endeavoured to infuſe calmneſs into his mind; and at length, ſomewhat ſucceeding, put into his hands the note he had received from Rufus; and raiſing him a little in bed with the aſſiſtance of Matilda, the Baron read it with fearful curioſity, and then burſt into an exclamation of joy. "God "be praiſed!" ſaid he, "that my cri-"minal purpoſes were not wholly exe-"cuted! I have it now in my power "to make ſome ſmall atonement for the

" cruel and wanton murders I ſo treach-
" erouſly committed. Where is he!
" Where is the repreſentative of my
" ſiſter!" " He is at the door, my Lord,"
replied the prieſt, " waiting your com-
" mands to enter." " Lead him in!
" O, lead him in!" The prieſt opened
the door, and Conrad entered the room;
the ſight of him again agitated the mind
of the Baron, and ſtaring wildly around,
he called out, " O, Roſalind, ſhew me
" not the wound I ſo barbarouſly gave
" thee! Ah! what groan was that? It
" was her dying groan! O ſpare, ſpare
" me!" and, convulſed with agony, he
remained for ſome time unconſcious of
the preſence of thoſe around him. At
length, becoming again more calm, the
prieſt retired to the chamber of Rufus,
and Conrad and Matilda remained alone
with the Baron.

The

The Baron now once more turned his eyes upon Conrad, and ſaid, "Conrad, "I deſigned to inflict undeſerved tortures "upon you, and am now become my-"ſelf the victim of torments inſupport-"able, and exceeding in a tenfold de-"gree all I could have inflicted upon "you. Alas! the fiend deſpair ſeizes "upon my mind, and fills it with unut-"terable anguiſh." "Penitence, my "Lord," replied Conrad, "may not "yet be too late." "Alas!" ſaid the "Baron, "I have drank to the very "dregs the cup of vice and criminality. "All is ſhade in the review of my con-"duct, and not one virtuous action can "I fix upon, whoſe clear light may ren-"der the darkneſs of that ſhade leſs "black." A fearful horror again over-powered him, and for ſome time rendered him incapable of proceeding. At length he

he continued, "You and Matilda have "long been united in love; your union "in marriage is an event which, far "from oppoſing, I now ardently wiſh "for; but from the relationſhip by "which you are connected, a papal "diſpenſation muſt be obtained before "the marriage can be ſolemnized, and "before that can be had, alas! I may "be numbered with the dead." Let us "hope not, my Lord," replied Con- "rad, "the Cardinal Legate is now in "the neighbourhood, and a diſpatch "may be inſtantly ſent to Rome to ob- "tain the deſired diſpenſation." "Send "a meſſenger then directly," retorted "the Baron, "and in the interim I will "make my will, and nominate you my "heir in the event of your marriage "with Matilda, but loſe no time in "ſending the meſſenger." Matilda's

eyes

eyes ſparkled with joy, whilſt Conrad immediately quitted the room, and haſting away, made all the neceſſary arrangements, and the meſſenger was immediately diſpatched.

The Baron was ſoon afterwards pronounced out of danger, and conſidered to be in a ſtate of convaleſcence. Rufus in the mean time died, and his death ſenſibly affected his maſter. Matilda attended upon her father with the moſt amiable care, and frequently by her aſſiduities drew tears of penitence and ſorrow from his eyes; whilſt Conrad forgot the wrongs inflicted upon him by the Baron, and aſſiſted her in her aſſiduous care. The interchange of teſtimonies of love, and the tendereſt ſentiments of affection filled up their time with the moſt pleaſing ſenſations, and prevented the tedium of expectation.

The

The meſſenger at length returned with the diſpenſation, and Conrad led the bluſhing maiden to the altar, and was irrevocably united to his beloved Matilda. Mutual love crowned their union with a wreath of happineſs.

The ſettled gloom of the Baron, and the pain ariſing from his indiſpoſition which ſtill continued, were ſomewhat relieved by the union, which ſo lately bringing forward inſtruments of torture to prevent, he was now impatiently anxious to accompliſh. Still, however, his illneſs, which had been ſuppoſed to have abated, began to increaſe, and his recovery again became doubtful. Continually haunted with terrors, he ſcarcely experienced a moment's peace; and at length, his indiſpoſition increaſing to a greater height, all hope of recovery vaniſhed. Matilda endeavoured to ſoothe him

him to calmneſs and peace, and Conrad tried to infuſe hope into his breaſt, but vain was their united exertion. Often would he contemplate the latter, until wild horror agitated his countenance, and the name of Roſalind faltered upon his tongue. His ſon haunted his imagination, and frequently fancy pourtrayed his bleeding corpſe upon the ground before him. Starting from the contemplation, he became the victim of almoſt inſupportable agony, and ſcarcely could his attendants prevent him convulſively trembling from running out of the apartments, eager to fly if poſſible from his own remembrance. Conrad now learnt for the firſt time, the plan formed for his aſſaſſination, and ſaw before him in the perſon of the Baron, the man who had given the dagger to another to perform a baſe murder which he was afraid of attempting himſelf.

himſelf. Still, however, he endeavoured to mitigate the pitiable miſery in which the Baron lay involved, and tried every means in his power to render affliction leſs heavy upon his ſoul. Black deſpair however ſeized upon the criminal and miſerable Baron de Umfreville, and no reaſoning could infuſe hope into his breaſt, no art could ſoothe, nor gaiety divert him. A prieſt was led to him for the purpoſe of performing the duties of religion; but half frantic with the fearful ſcenes preſented by his imagination, and the gloomy reflections of his mind, he daſhed to the ground the Miſſal from the hand of the trembling prieſt, and with a look of horror and wild affright, called out, "Roſalind, thy murder is avenged! "See how they ſtand pale and bleeding, "reproaching me with their murder!— "Blood demands blood, you ſhall have "it."

" it," and fiercely ſeizing his dagger, plunged it to his heart before thoſe who ſurrounded him could prevent the murderous act, and with an agonizing ſtruggle, breathed his laſt.

All were ſtruck with horror, and remained for ſome time fearfully fixed to the ſpot; at length other aſſiſtance was procured; the corpſe of the Baron was removed, and preparations made for the celebration of the funeral obſequies. The gentle Matilda wept over the remembrance of the expiring agonies of her father, and Conrad ſoothed her grief by the tendereſt attentions. The remains of the Baron were interred, and Conrad took poſſeſſion of the Barony to which he now ſucceeded. The laſt remnants of Sir Fitzhugh and Lady Roſalind were likewiſe conveyed by his orders from the

Weſt Tower, and interred with all the honours due to their rank.

Building ſome neat cottages upon a part of his domains, he gave liberty to the unfortunate females in the Eaſt Tower, the ſlaves of his uncle's pleaſures, and eſtabliſhing them there, allotted to them a complete ſubſiſtence.

Jaques he ſent for, and reproached him with being the ready inſtrument of the Baron, for the purpoſe of his aſſaſſination. Jaques confeſſed the crime, but pleaded the influence of the alternate threats and promiſes of his maſter in its extenuation. Conrad allowed ſomething for his plea, but ſeverely reprimanded him for the willingneſs of his conſent to the nefarious propoſal of the Baron. At length he beſtowed upon him a portion of land, the produce of which, with induſtry, was ſufficient to afford him a comfortable ſubſiſtence,

ſiſtence, and diſmiſſed him with the admonition to ſeek independence in the chearful vale of induſtry, inſtead of the crooked and gloomy paths of vice. Jaques profited by the advice of his Lord; and marrying his long loved Margaret, became an honeſt induſtrious farmer upon the eſtate of Umfreville.

Conrad and Matilda had each felt the ſhafts of adverſity and misfortune, and were not now elate with proſperity. Deriving happineſs from ſeeing all happy around them within the ſphere of their benevolence, it was their conſtant endeavour to promote and aſſiſt induſtry, and remove whatever obſtacles impeded its exertion. Every individual upon the wide domains of Umfreville, became an object of their care; and whilſt diſſipated indolence met their marked reprobation, the efforts of perſevering induſtry were encouraged, and kindly

kindly aided, until ultimately crowned with ſucceſs. Their kind benevolence robbed the calamities of the humble peaſant of their force, and turning aſide their pointed attacks, enabled him again to tread with pleaſing hope in the peaceful paths of labour. Themſelves a pattern of conjugal fidelity, and connubial happineſs, in the reſources of literature they found an uſeful and agreeable employment for every hour that was not ſpent in the interchange of affection, in ſocial harmony, or the contemplation of the fair face of nature, and the paſſing moments glided ſwiftly away void of wearineſs and anxiety.

FINIS.